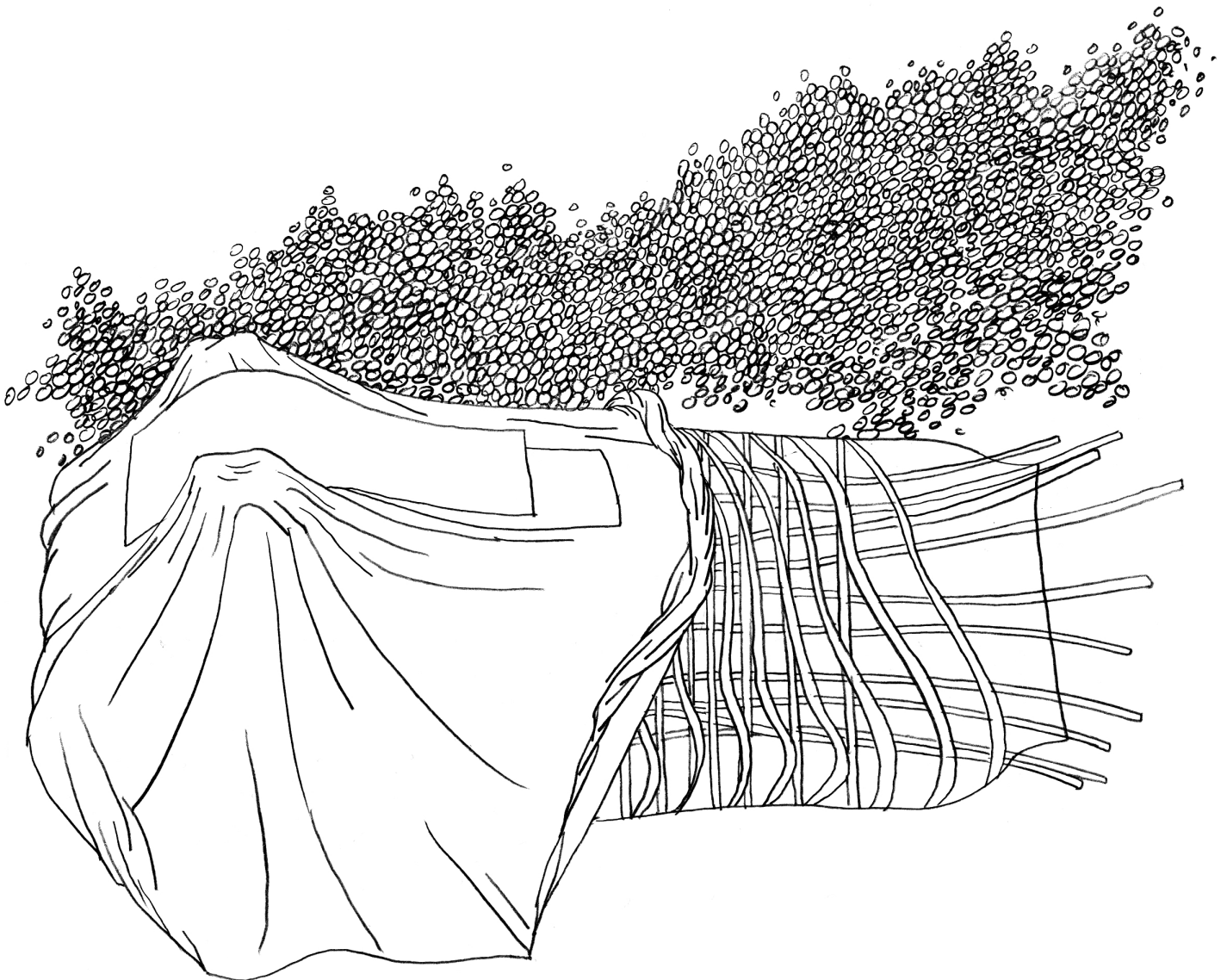


# Towards the Manifesto

## *Tracing a Genre at the Crossroads of Architectural Theory and Practice*

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The paper addresses the ontological and epistemological problem of characterizing and defining the architectural manifesto and aims to identify the defining frameworks, conditions, and criteria of manifestos and their various physical embodiments in architecture. Several narrowly focused analytical perspectives are adopted to address what constitutes a manifesto and the traits for its identification: from a general definition of the term manifesto toward its specific utilization as an attribute or category of primarily textual declarative expressions, and ultimately to a specific segment of the genre that aims to define the future direction of architectural thinking and practice.

### Introduction

At the onset of the reflections leading to the present paper lay a question, only seemingly straightforward: What is, or can be considered, an architectural manifesto? A general and intuitive response might characterise the term as a text or statement that explicitly bears this designation, or one that fulfils a set of criteria typically attributed to this genre.

From both a linguistic and a genre perspective, the *Manifesto del Futurismo* (1909), is generally considered a milestone in the emergence of artistic manifestos in the European context.<sup>1</sup> Until then, a manifesto primarily was applied to a document issued by governmental bodies or political movements, such as the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848).<sup>2</sup> A common feature of both the Communist (political) and Futurist (artistic) manifestos is the rousing and declarative nature of the text. The Futurists not only reinterpreted the manifesto as a crucial participant in the field of art but also embraced it as a declarative text-act announcing the emergence of a new artistic movement. And it was also from the Italian Futurist circle that the first text emerged explicitly addressing architecture under the title of manifesto, *L'architettura futurista: manifesto* (1914).<sup>3</sup>

However, a broader examination of the terminological functioning of the word “manifesto” within architectural discourse reveals a fundamental paradox: despite its widespread usage, no systematic definitional framework has been established. As we demonstrate in the second chapter of our paper, various heterogeneous, even occasionally contradictory, expressions are frequently categorized under this designation. Moreover, in art and architecture, a manifesto can transcend the conventions

of a traditionally written text and potentially incorporate programmatic statements, projects, or realized works, thereby expanding its semantic field and introducing additional layers of complexity.

Our research primarily aims to explore what constitutes the defining traits of an architectural manifesto and the criteria by which it can be identified. Given the complexity of the subject, we have adopted several narrowly focused analytical perspectives. These progress from a general definition of the term “manifesto” toward its specific utilization as an attribute or category of primarily textual declarative expressions, and ultimately address a specific segment of the genre that aims to define the future direction of architectural thinking and practice.

In the first part of the text, we aim to examine how the term manifesto and its derivatives have been used in selected languages, what attributes of content, form, and genre it acquired, and to what extent these are linked with the use of the term itself to designate various written or other expressions.

Secondly, we will address the manifesto as a genre, primarily through an analysis of selected anthologies and attempts at its theoretical reflection, differentiating between texts explicitly designated as manifestos and others that possess manifesto-like qualities, examining the criteria upon which such classifications are predicated. Furthermore, this section identifies and evaluates the essential attributes that scholars, editors, and theorists typically require when assessing and categorizing texts within the manifesto genre.

In the third section, we primarily focus on Le Corbusier's book *Vers une architecture*. Although only designated

as a manifesto retrospectively, it nonetheless belongs among the most influential programmatic texts in modern architecture. Our inquiry will address whether, and by what set of criteria, the book can be classified as a manifesto, and how such analysis might expand our understanding of the architectural manifesto as a genre.

Ultimately, we proceed towards a more fundamental consideration of “manifestness” as a concept – one that necessitates engagement with both ontological and epistemological dimensions of architectural discourse, raising several critical questions: To what extent can we establish definitive frameworks, conditions, and criteria for identifying manifestos within architectural theory? Is there an essential nature of manifestos that remains recognizable across historical contexts? Or has the historical evolution of this genre led to such overwhelming dissolution of boundaries that its conceptual delineation has become increasingly problematic?

### *The Manifesto as Term*

Looking at the word “manifest” in selected etymological dictionaries, it can be found that while the root of the word undoubtedly refers to the word “manus” [hand], the word-forming suffix (morpheme) “(i)fest” is ambiguous in interpretation. In *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages*, “manu/ifestus” is defined as “caught in the act, evident”.<sup>4</sup> In the etymological dictionary of the Italian language,<sup>5</sup> the term “manifesto” [from Latin “manifestus”] is described as a compound of the words: “manus” [hand] and “fest”. At this point, the dictionary author refers to Corssen,<sup>6</sup> for whom “fest” represents a possible radical “fend” from words like “of-fendere” or “in-festare” in the sense of hitting or touching. “Manifestus” could thus semantically represent beaten, touched, surprised, caught by hand, caught in the act, revealed. The noun “manifesto” can be understood, according to the dictionary, as a written statement [*scrittura*], public declaration [*dichiarazione*], or announcement. In the etymological dictionary of the German language, the second part of the word, “festus”, is labeled as unclear.<sup>7</sup>

The authors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* note that the noun “manifest” appears in textual references between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in the sense of “indication” and “manifestation”, and from the 17<sup>th</sup> century also as “public proclamation” and “declaration”. The issue of the second morpheme of the word “manifest” (this time in the context of the adjective) is addressed similarly to the previously mentioned Italian dictionary. “Festus” is interpreted in the sense of “hit”, with the authors directing us to compare it with the word “infestus” (dangerous), where the word root is found in terms like “of-fendere” and “de-fendere”. Semantically, we again arrive at the concept of “tangible”, but also at the concept of “evident”, which more closely follows the German dictionary and the verb “manifestieren”. Examples of the word’s usage in this sense are cited from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the noun and adjective “manifest”, there is also a separate

space in the dictionary for the word “manifesto”, indicating public declaration or proclamation, which can be issued by ruling political figures, but also by an individual or a collective. The purpose of such a declaration is to inform the public about past or upcoming actions and explain their reasons.<sup>9</sup> In the context of our paper, the term “manifestness” – a kind of obviousness or the condition of being manifest – is also important.

The noun “manifestation” has been used since the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the sense of “demonstration”, “revelation”, or “display of existence”. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “manifestation” also represents a public act by a government or a collective action organized by a political party to draw attention to its views.<sup>10</sup>

Our research addresses two distinct aspects: first, the lexical meaning of the word “manifesto”, and second, whether common contextual, stylistic, or formal features can be identified that would constitute a distinctive genre. Rather than providing an exhaustive etymological analysis, we aim to outline a brief trajectory of dictionary definitions to identify potential shifts in interpretative definitions following the emergence of artistic manifestos. Our selection of dictionaries and encyclopaedias focuses temporally on the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the period from 1909 to 1940. Given that this paper primarily examines European avant-gardes, we have selected reference works from German, Italian, Russian, French, and Czech sources – languages in which artistic manifestos most frequently appeared during the genre’s formative period.<sup>11</sup>

In German dictionaries from 1863, 1876, and 1908, the term “manifest” is described as a public or state declaration/document in which ruling figures publicly declare their actions and the reasons for carrying them out.<sup>12</sup> In *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon*, one example cited is that of a manifesto associated with a political party, whereby “manifestation” is described as an explication or clarification of thoughts and intentions.<sup>13,14</sup>

A more extensive lexicon is found in the Italian *Vocabolario della lingua italiana* from 1838 and *Novissimo dizionario della lingua italiana* from 1939. The explanation of the word “manifestamento” is formed through its use in sentences, where it could be replaced by synonyms such as expression or revelation. The term “manifesto” is understood as a document [*scrittura*] that anyone creates, intending to publish an explanation/clarification [*ragioni*], and it can be placed in a public place for the purpose of informing the public.<sup>15</sup>

The terms “scrittura” and “ragioni” in relation to manifesto are also employed in the publication *Dizionario della lingua Italiana* from 1869: “Scrittura fatta da chicchessia per far pubbliche le sue ragioni, una sua impresa, un libro.”<sup>16</sup> In this context, however, the word manifesto represents, in contemporary terminology, an advertising poster. As an example of the word’s usage in sentences, the explanation cites a quotation from a 16<sup>th</sup>-century publication by Sebastiano Fausto da Longiano, addressing



the distinction between the terms *manifesto*, *rogito*, and *cartello*.<sup>17</sup> A manifesto, in his consideration, is a document addressed to the public, in which the author attempts to dispel accusations raised against them. Through a manifesto, one can also inform the public about a past, present, or future matter for the purpose of informing, apologizing, or setting things right.<sup>18</sup>

According to the definitions in the Russian dictionary *Tolkovyj slovar' živogo velikorusskogo jazyka* from 1905 and 1914, the term “manifest” [манифест] refers to a public letter (document), announcement, and government declaration. In the case of a declaration by a known group of people, the term “manifestacija” [манифестация] was used.<sup>19</sup> In the 1929 publication *Slovar' russkogo jazyka*, a “manifest” also denotes the declaration of a program or conviction of a certain group of people, as well as an individual. The Communist Manifesto and “literary manifesto of the Romantics” are cited as examples. In terms of meaning, “manifestacija” does not differ significantly from manifest.<sup>20</sup>

The term “manifest” can be traced more continuously in the French context, as the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* has been published regularly since 1694.<sup>21</sup> In its seventh edition from 1878, the noun “manifeste” is primarily associated with power structures. Through manifestos, individuals clarify their actions in significant matters. As in the case of Italian dictionaries, it refers to a type of written record [écrit]. The term “manifestation; has a broader semantic extent, also being attributed to assemblies or movements [mouvements] as an act of publicizing demands.

The dictionary definition of the noun “manifeste” from 1935 does not undergo a significant change, but in addition to the original act of reporting on one's actions, individuals can use a manifesto to express their opinion on various topics.<sup>22</sup> Reference to artistic movements appears only in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* published in 2000, where its form is still bound to text [texte, écrit].<sup>23</sup>

In the Czech linguistic context, encyclopedic works constitute the foundational literature for explaining individual terms, a result of the absence of monolingual dictionaries in the selected period. In *Ottův slovník naučný* (1900), and the later *Masarykův slovník naučný* from 1929, a “manifest”, as was the case in other languages, is associated with a public declaration by the government (war manifesto), while it can also be used to designate other public declarations (an election manifesto is given as an example). No association with art occurs, and the definition of the word “manifestace” does not deviate from that of manifest.<sup>24</sup>

In *Příruční slovník jazyka českého* (1937–1938), already several variations are listed of the word with the same root. No change occurs in the definition of manifest compared to previous dictionaries, yet wider examples of the term's usage are found in sentences containing phrases such as “manifest Moderny” [Manifesto of Modernism]

and “manifest českých spisovatelů” [Manifesto of Czech Writers].<sup>25</sup> More germane for the the context of our research is the term “manifestace” and its listed synonym “projevování” [expression].<sup>26</sup>

From the dictionary definitions presented across different languages, we can arrange the potential definitions of the term into three categories. First, a manifesto is a public announcement or declaration, primarily associated historically with the ruling authorities (government/state declaration). Its written form was the prevalent one, and its content was intended to be accessible to a wide audience. Second, its content also included clarification or explanation. The statement not only asserts something but also explains this assertion, argues for it, attempts to legitimize it, and demonstrates its truth or necessity. Lastly, the category, which shares a significant meaning with the word manifestation, consists of expression, revelation, or disclosure. Manifestation can be understood as an ongoing act of revealing oneself, the result of which could be a manifest.

### *The Manifesto as Concept*

Numerous types of anthologies bring together curated selections of what the editors consider to be manifestos – from political through artistic to architectural.<sup>27</sup> Beyond lexical definitions, the introductions to these collections offer us further possibilities for understanding the concept of manifesto, the methodology for selecting texts, and the definitional frameworks of the editors. Some explicitly describe the program to be manifested, others implicitly assume it, and still others reject any such statement, because “Allerdings scheinen Definitionen hier kompliziert und nicht in jedem Fall für die Textauswahl ergiebig.”<sup>28</sup> Cases of such deliberate unwillingness to postulate a definition complicate our understanding, but on the other hand, provide their own informative value. By studying these works, we obtain a diverse spectrum of conditions that a text should meet to be considered a manifesto. And again, some proactively claim this status through their own title, others became designated as such ex-post. From the lexical definitions, we have abstracted 3 basic criteria, which the following part of the article aims to confirm or refute as the characteristics of architectural and artistic manifestos, or respectively supplement them with additional criteria.

When reading such anthologies, we can see a variety of different writing styles and genres. For Abastado, such diversity is itself a pivotal characteristic of the manifesto – it does not and cannot have a definitive form. An essay, declaration, book introduction, pamphlet, and many other types/styles/genres of texts can equally be a manifesto.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, it is not easily identifiable according to formal or stylistic criteria; indeed, several typologies can even be combined in a single work. The first chapter of the Communist Manifesto, for instance, is a monologic theoretical treatise, an interpretation of history, while the second resembles a reworked Platonic dialogue in

which Marx responds to the bourgeoisie's objections to communism.

The open form of the manifesto is one of the reasons why anthology editors hesitate to approach a clear definition: to be excessively precise would close the door to texts that might not meet it, but which, using other criteria, should have their place. Therefore, by rejecting strict delineation, they leave themselves a certain room for maneuver and perhaps also for avoiding possible criticism. Jencks, in his introduction to an anthology of architectural manifestos, presents an explanation of the origin of the manifesto through the Bible, which he considers to be the first example of its kind. He points out that even God, if considered as the author of this manifesto, uses a variety of characters and approaches in both the Old and New Testaments and simultaneously in their individual books.<sup>30</sup>

Asholt and Fährnders, through their selection of over 250 manifestos, point to their two key common characteristics: collectivity and breakthrough quality. Through their forceful, revolutionary, and groundbreaking nature, manifestos aim to evoke two kinds of change: an internal one within the discipline and an external one directed outward toward society. The first intent works toward establishing a new paradigm in art or architecture. According to Danchev, artistic manifestos are energetic and reducible to two basic tropes: "'Long live -!' and 'Down with -!'"<sup>31</sup> which express a radical rejection of previously valid art forms and a welcome to new ones; a revolutionary overthrow of the old system and creation of a new one.

The external breakthrough quality of the manifesto is tied to its political nature, which Lyon, Burger, and Meyer understand in the broadest sense of the word.<sup>32</sup> The manifesto intervenes in the public sphere, voicing its demands for a new organization and functioning of society. Politics, as such, is a direct and integral part of any manifesto.<sup>33</sup> However, these two concepts should not be confused. Burger distinguishes three types of manifestos – political, literary, and avant-garde, or artistic.<sup>34</sup> While the first one deals exclusively with the organization and functioning of society, the second one creates fictional authorial worlds. The third one, however, also creates a new world through its works, which manifest, reveal it, which corresponds with dictionary entries. And indeed, a revolutionary character has been associated with the manifesto since its beginnings, from Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto through many avant-garde artistic and architectural manifestos.

The collectivity of a manifesto lies in its intent, even if written by an individual, of speaking either on behalf of an extant group or of establishing one to match the proclaimed principles. Throughout history, manifestos were typically written as declarations of some significant personality or ruler, but with gradual social changes and the emancipation of broader segments of the population, they have acquired a more collective character. Later, the most significant manifestos of modernity presented

demands or declarations of groups, e. g. Futurists, Communists, Surrealists, Dadaists. Especially in the case of avant-garde movements, there existed a strong need to distinguish themselves from parallel emerging groups. In summarizing common interests, goals, and demands, they render their identification as, equally, an external differentiation.

Besides the author's perspective, the addressee of the manifesto is also important. Following Jencks's Biblical analogy, the mutual relationship between God and Moses is very personal. Creating a relationship between author and reader is, according to Jencks, a key aspect of the manifesto; hence in his view, *Toward an Architecture* emerges as one of the most effective, pointing out that Le Corbusier "constantly address the reader as 'you' and reiterates the joint 'we' until an implied pact is built up between author and convert. A manifesto must manifest its message to you, personally."<sup>35</sup> For Abastado, communication between these two parties even takes the form of commands and orders. It requires its recipient to take their own position on the presented offer of a new establishment, art, architecture, world.<sup>36</sup> Whether to accept or reject it, the recipient is key, and therefore the manifesto needs to know clearly to whom it speaks, what it says, why it says, and how it says. If it wants to change the world, it needs to convince and rouse the passive reader to active action: the reason for manifestos containing so many exclamatory and imperative sentences.

The manifesto, to clarify its visions and achieve the desired effect, deliberately polarizes society into "us" versus "them". Alongside political manifestos,<sup>37</sup> artistic ones do this as well: "Artists' movements and artists' manifestos typically define themselves against."<sup>38</sup> According to Danchev, it is not at all difficult to determine who they stand against, often state their opponents explicitly. Usually, these are their rivals – whether human, social, historical, technical, and so on. This feature is strongly present, for instance, among the Futurists, who were against the past, in turn recalling Danchev's cited remarks about summarizing the existing and praising the new. A contrasting dichotomous view of the world, its simplification, division into good and bad, past and future is an effective rhetorical tool that supports Jencks's double metaphor. In his Christian interpretation of the origins of the manifesto, he uses two analogies – the volcano and the tablet; the manifesto achieves its effectiveness respectively through emotions and through laws and theories. If the explosiveness of manifestos resembles God's wrath, which in certain passages of the Bible is terrifying and evokes fear leading to unity and desired action,<sup>39</sup> the tablets are, for Jencks, the metaphor for the theoretical dimensions of the manifesto. If theory is "viewing or contemplation",<sup>40</sup> then it is beyond inflammable passions; via rational and thoughtful steps, it postulates certain rules by which we should abide. The suggestiveness of the manifesto lies not only in arousing passions in us, or conversely, engaging our intellect, but simultaneously, as if that were not

enough, it tries to convince its audience using all possible rhetorical tools. As it, consequently, targets both the rational and irrational sides of human nature, the manifesto aims, in short, to manipulate its reader.

The utopian nature of the manifesto lies in its complexity, its vision of a new society and new cultural and artistic expressions, which builds upon the previously mentioned parallel change both inward and outward. The manifesto criticizes the status quo, the current and lived experience with art and society, against which it offers an alternative. Yet the requirement of utopianism, additionally, insists on qualitative change, establishing an ideal goal toward which we should strive. Danchev states that “To make a manifesto is to imagine or hallucinate the Promised Land, wherever that might be. It is in its own ways a utopian project.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, this utopian stance lies in the complexity and holistic nature of the manifested conceptions,<sup>42</sup> meaning in their extension of art into the sphere of political life. “For without the motive to change the world the manifesto would not be written.”<sup>43</sup> In the case of political manifestos, this is self-evident. Marx and Engels in the Manifesto of the Communist Party present a new stateless and classless society, radically different from all previous development of human history. And in their own way, artistic manifestos do so as well, albeit less explicitly, postulating a vision of a new society for which new art will exist. New art will only be realized with a change in the cultural paradigm, demanding a new life practice, new rules, in which, according to Jencks, they precede art itself.<sup>44</sup>

Using the evidence of dictionary definitions, we derived the public, the justifiable, and the ability to reveal as key attributes of the manifesto. In this subchapter, using anthology editors and theorists, we have identified several further characteristics: openness of forms, collectivity, breakthrough quality, polarization, simultaneous theoretical and emotional dimensions, manipulation, utopianism, and direct addressability. The diversity of these properties can be clarified by dividing them into two basic categories: formal and content-related, or instrumental and goal-oriented. Indeed, some of them serve only as a means to achieve the desired result. Emotions, a dichotomous worldview, simplification, building a relationship between author and recipient, forceful and addressed writing style are not essential in themselves: all these possibilities are only tools that the author of the manifesto can use for more effective communication and content dissemination. To find the common thread, it might consist of a certain theorization of some phenomenon, discipline, world, evaluation of the current, undesired state, and offering a new, different, utopian alternative. The authorship of the manifesto aims for a new world, whether the larger one or at least the world of its discipline. As we have seen, however, their relationships are closely interconnected. The urgency, the immediacy of its expression shows the importance of the text. Neither a newspaper report nor a novel, it is a specific act of a person or people who aims

to grasp the contemporary world and reconstruct it into a new, better form with the intention of genuine achievement of the stated aim. As such, it forms simultaneously a challenge for others to join and build it together.

If we are to answer what an architectural manifesto is, we should view it through its means and goals. The history of architectural reflection shows us that writing about the subject has a long tradition. Vitruvius's *De architectura* from the first century BC is considered the oldest preserved comprehensive treatise on architecture. At the same time, his theoretical work is considered a representative of the treatise, which became an established genre. He was followed by, for example, Leon Battista Alberti with *De re aedificatoria* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Andrea Palladio in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with *Quattro libri d'architettura*, Marc-Antoine Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture* from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, or *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten* by Gottfried Semper in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While these writings are mostly extensive theoretical works addressing many aspects of the discipline, they are all linked by their complex view of architecture, its explanation, description, and functional analysis. Our efforts so far have shown that, contrary to common belief, length need not be a defining criterion for a manifesto. What distinguishes a manifesto from a treatise, or indeed any other theoretical architectural writing, is its refusal to remain bound by the confines of what architecture was and what it is, turning instead to what it should be and, by extension, what the world as such should be. And these means, as described previously, are thus set into motion to effect change, compelling the readers to take real actions toward the desired change. While a treatise typically does not attack the emotions, conviction, or actually its reader at all, a manifesto does so with pleasure. As long as the treatise tries to answer the question “what is architecture?” as impartially as possible, a manifesto gives its own authorial answer to “how/what should architecture be?”

### *The Manifesto as Book?*

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the genre of the manifesto thus entered into an already established and differentiated tradition of thinking and writing about architecture, as outlined above. Many architects now sought to pronounce judgment on the changes in what and how architecture should be, whether through texts attributed as manifestos or through other means. Undoubtedly among the most influential was Le Corbusier. His compendium *Vers une Architecture* having undergone numerous re-editions in different languages and remaining a subject of critical discourse even more than a century following the publication of its first edition<sup>45</sup> in 1923, ranking it among the most influential contributions to architectural thinking in the Euro-American context of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The question that remains unresolved, and which we intend to examine further, is whether and in what regard this volume can be classified as a manifesto. To approach this inquiry, we will first analyze the



relationship between *Vers une Architecture* and the term “manifesto” and its derivatives.

Prior to its publication, Le Corbusier (still using his birth name Charles Edouard Jeanneret) co-authored programmatic texts on Purism that are themselves considered as manifestos, despite absence of the term itself from their titles. The situation is similar with *Vers une Architecture*. Le Corbusier did not directly reference the genre of manifesto within the original text, nor did he initially classify his work as such. However, the words “manifest”, “manifestation”, and their derivatives appear repeatedly throughout the original text in several contexts. We base our analysis on John Goodman’s recent English translation<sup>46</sup> and the revised French edition from 1977,<sup>47</sup> which also includes introductions to the second and third editions.

An analysis of Le Corbusier’s text reveals the repeated use of terms containing the root “manifest” in several instances, for example when he states that architecture is manifesting itself through volume and surface<sup>48</sup> or defines architecture as “the first manifestation of man creating his universe”,<sup>49</sup> eventually describing the axis as “perhaps the first human manifestation”.<sup>50</sup> Le Corbusier also employs this term in various other contexts, noting that “steel beams and, more recently reinforced concrete are pure manifestations of calculations”,<sup>51</sup> describing ocean liners as “an important manifestation of temerity, discipline, and harmony”<sup>52</sup> or discussing how competition in automobile production drives “a manifestation not only of perfection and harmony, but of beauty.”<sup>53</sup> This use of the term does not refer to the manifesto genre as such, but consistently matches one of the dictionary definitions of related terms, such as “manifesting” or “manifest”, in the sense of making things visible or apparent.

Le Corbusier referred to the book as a manifesto only retrospectively, with the first mention occurring in the preface to the third edition. Before examining this circumstance in more detail, we will briefly outline the introduction to the second edition,<sup>54</sup> published in November 1924, which reflects the book’s reception one year after the first edition was published and helps to better understand the intended audience and Le Corbusier’s perception of the contemporary situation as demanding immediate action. According to him, the book aroused lively interest in architecture through its having been intended not only for professionals but also for the broader public. Le Corbusier speaks of a new era, which needs to build its own house and perceives architecture as a reflection of its time, further emphasising that the focus of architecture has switched from the palace to the “ordinary and common house”.<sup>55</sup> In the following fiery passage, Le Corbusier confronts the immediate past and describes the traditions and conventions of the previous era as a suffocating “lead-en sheath” that needs to be pierced or broken through to have a view beyond. This increasingly assertive and mobilising stance suggests that the updated introductory chapters of the new editions themselves could contribute

to a reframing of how the book should be perceived, as well as to an intensification of its call for action.

In the introductory text, entitled “Température”<sup>56</sup> and written in January 1928, Le Corbusier addresses even more explicitly several contemporary events, such as the competition for the Palace of Nations and the controversial public reception of the Weissenhof Estate. In line with the introduction to the second edition, he also develops the theme of the palace and the house for the “ordinary man”. Through the concept of the palace, Le Corbusier addresses the competition for the new building of the Palace of Nations and reflects on the rejection of his proposal, asserting that this development signifies a regression and thus rendering *Vers une architecture* relevant again. Consequently, he repeatedly refers to the book as a manifesto, and even a “livre-manifeste” [book-manifesto].<sup>57</sup>

Accepting Le Corbusier’s attribution of *Vers une architecture* as a manifesto as our working hypothesis, we can now turn to the book itself and address two main questions: which aspects of the book fulfill the above-mentioned attributes of a manifesto, and to what extent the work might extend or diversify these conventional characteristics. Several aspects of the book as a whole and its structure have been addressed in detail by Jean-Louis Cohen in his extensive introduction<sup>58</sup> to the revised English translation, therefore we need not engage in their detailed analysis. Among recent contributions to a more complex approach to Le Corbusier’s work, we should also mention the paper “On the Problem of Defining Architecture in Toward an Architecture / Smerom (či K) architektúre”<sup>59</sup> by Marian Zervan. Questioning the interpretation of the book only as “a manifesto for a newly emerging, contemporary and period architecture”<sup>60</sup> and its frequent attribution as incoherent and inconsistent, Zervan argued that “it represents a consistent attempt to express a concept or conception of architecture that is able to link architecture’s original meaning with its new possibilities.”<sup>61</sup>

In our further analysis, we will focus primarily on identifying the manifesto-like qualities of the book by examining its diverse textual and visual components. As stated above, an architectural manifesto primarily aims to communicate what/how architecture should be. We consider Le Corbusier’s book *Vers une Architecture* a particularly suitable subject for analysing how different genres and media can serve in this manner, especially due to its heterogeneous structure – assembled from articles originally published separately in *L’Esprit Nouveau*, new texts, and a set of short sentences arranged under the title “Arguments”, introducing each chapter of the book and creating a unifying scheme that itself serves as an index.

Whilst the first chapter outlines a new approach to the relationship between engineers and architects leading to a novel aesthetic, the next three subchapters or “Three Reminders to Architects” primarily aim to raise awareness of the architectural value of engineering structures,

emphasising volume and surface as fundamental principles that contemporary architects should consider. The subchapter dedicated to the notion of the plan brings together ancient historical references and contemporary urban concepts, a contrast illustrating one of the essential aspects of Corbusier's thinking: the break with the immediate past while seeking universal principles in more distant historical periods. Subsequently, we encounter reflections on contemporary architectural problems and solutions, specifically the chapter "Regulating Lines" conceived with these intentions in mind. The following section, entitled "Eyes That Do Not See...", focuses on contemporary means of transport and the engineering solutions to the problems they generate. Le Corbusier identifies the defining characteristic of each: the emerging of a new style exemplified by ocean liners, the principle of high selection demonstrated by aircraft, and the standardisation achieved in automobiles, advocating that contemporary architecture should embrace these modern approaches.

The subsequent thematic triad begins with references to history, using selected examples of architecture from ancient Rome, allowing Le Corbusier once again to address the issues of volume and surface. Through a series of historical examples, he then appeals to architects to recognize the plan as the essential generative force that drives and determines architectural form. Finally, in the third subchapter Le Corbusier concludes his line of argument by asserting that construction, while necessary, is insufficient for architecture. Moving beyond the principles discussed earlier, he now demands that the architect become a "plastic artist" capable of achieving "contour modulation" – understood as the artistic manipulation of volumes in light that elevates mere construction to architecture through composition, drawing inspiration primarily from classical Greek fragments of the Parthenon. As the title of this part indicates, architecture should be a "Pure Creation of the Mind" – contrasting with the spirit of the following chapter, where Le Corbusier offers a more practical vision for architecture, envisioning a new era characterised by standardised housing solutions, as exemplified by several of his recent projects. The final chapter, entitled "Architecture or Revolution", oscillates between architectural and political statements, forcefully appealing to architects to reflect on social and economic changes. Le Corbusier even sharpens his argument to the conclusion that only architecture can prevent social revolution.

In addition to the text, Le Corbusier's book also has an inseparable visual layer that is equally complex. Various media are used, including photographs, drawings, projects from different sources, his own sketches and designs, and documentation of historical buildings and engineering works, such as cars, aircraft, or ships. Their relationship to the text also varies; sometimes they are more illustrative, while in other instances they adopt a more projective role, particularly in the case of his designs and projects, some of which were never realised yet still convey his vision of new architecture.

### Conclusion:

#### *Towards an Architectural Manifesto*

Ultimately, we would like to link the conceptual and content perspectives to define the framework of what we call manifestness, using *Vers une Architecture* as an example. Does Corbusier's book possess this quality? We believe it does, and furthermore, that it transcends it. It surpasses or expands manifestness in multiple spheres: it is simultaneously a treatise, and this manifesto is realised through his projects, which are additional manifestos, not in textual form, but as works or designs. Both components are bearers of the radical demand to translate the new era into architecture, accepting the transformed society as a foundational condition while seeking to reshape architecture to align with its requirements. Similarly, both clearly define themselves against an unsatisfactory status quo and present specific rules and steps to achieve this goal. And moreover, the book exhibits a wide range of key characteristics that fulfil the conditions of manifestness: radicality in its propositions; the deliberate construction of relationships with its recipients through directly addressing them and rhetorical techniques; specificity in targeting both the architectural profession and broader society; calls for action and mobilization; and a polemical stance against established practices, offering concrete alternatives.

All of these textual measures are placed in service of a goal that cannot be defined as "new architecture" in the sense of rejecting its history. Rather, Le Corbusier as author contemplates it in such a way as to extract the universal, timeless essence, qualities, and values of architecture present across different historical periods, which he wishes to manifest in his own time. By doing so, he meets the conditions of all three dictionary definitions – he substantiates his argument while simultaneously unveiling not only a contemporary "Zeitgeist", but no less the broader trajectory of architecture itself, from its origins to its future, through principles such as regulating lines, modulation, and beyond. His utopia is not an unattainable tomorrow built on the ruins of a destroyed present, but architecture itself – its past, present, and future, condensed to their essence. Consequently, Le Corbusier's contribution remains constantly relevant and supportive to the repeated reassessment and reinterpretation of the concept of the architectural manifesto.

In conclusion, after presenting individual approaches to what a manifesto could and should be, we are left unable to postulate any definitive definition. The authors' views sometimes overlap, but often remain different and not exhaustive. However, we can identify one key essential feature: the manifesto captures the event of the new, the preliminary, in the state of its emergence. We can find this nature of the manifesto across periods, styles, and disciplines, and it is accompanied by all other formal and genre characteristics. Through them, it establishes something new and shows its ability to record and convey this event to the surroundings, as does Le Corbusier when he establishes architecture anew from itself.



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