

Design of Cities The International Style

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- The Bauhaus, while a design movement - also included a socialist agenda.
- In America, the Bauhaus was a design movement known as *The International Style* (Hitchcock and Johnson, 1932) and defined by three principles:
 - ‘architecture as volume rather than mass’;
 - ‘regularity rather than axial symmetry’; and
 - the avoidance of ‘arbitrary applied ornament.’ [Hitchcock and Johnson 1932]
- Henry-Russell Hitchcock, “in this essay of 1928 he had coined a new term: the advanced style was he wrote, ‘very definitely not a French, nor a Dutch, nor a German, nor a Russian, but an international style.’
- First major exhibit: 1932, *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* at the Modern Museum of Art (Second show in Philly and third in Hartford)
- The modernist movement, the International Style, in America was a design movement - not a social (planning) movement.

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- The International Style represented, at that time, perhaps the most abrupt change in living and working environments in the history of architecture. Its airy and immaculate spaces, defined and dramatized with primary colors on flat surfaces and bold lines that met at right angles, amounted to three-dimensional abstractions—a total rejection of the overstuffed and stylistically jumbled surroundings of nearly every European and American. The house, in Le Corbusier’s words, would become ‘a machine for living.’ (Gaddis, 2000: 171)



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- In chapter 10 of *The International Style* while discussing Siedlung, the German word for neighborhood or settlement, Hitchcock and Johnson place distance between the International Style and the Bauhaus (as a social movement), and make clear American ideals and freedom of choice. They explain:
 - The *Siedlung* implies preparation not for a given family, but for a typical family. *This statistical monster, the typical family, has no personal existence and cannot defend itself against the sociological theories of the architects.* The European functionalists in their annual conferences set up standards for ideal minimal dwellings. *These standards often have little relation to the actual ways of living of those who are to inhabit them.* Yet such theorizing has value as an instrument of social process. Architects in private, as well as in public, practice must suggest and provide for the amelioration and development of the functions of living. They are specialists who can translate vague desires into realities. *But there should be a balance between evolving ideals of housing for scientific living and providing comfortable houses for ordinary living.* (Hitchcock and Johnson, 1932: 103)

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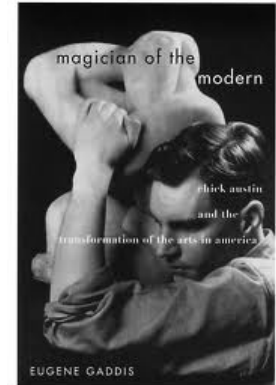
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- Key individuals in the creation and promotion of The International Style and Modernist Movement in America:
 - Henry-Russell Hitchcock
 - Philip Johnson
 - Alfred Barr
 - A. Everett 'Chick' Austin
 - Kirnstine ???
- All were Harvard graduates and close friends.
- Locations:
 - Boston: Kirnstine at the Fogg Museum and Harvard University
 - Hartford: Chick Austin at the Wadsworth and Trinity College
 - Middletown: Henry-Russell Hitchcock at Wesleyan University
 - New York City: Alfred Barr and Philip Johnson at the Modern Museum of Art (MoMA)
- Others:
 - Richard Neutra
 - Frank Lloyd Wright

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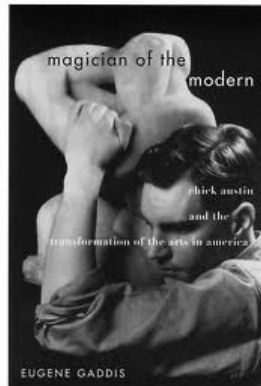
- Improbably, the museum and the theater were not in a great cosmopolitan city, but in Hartford, Connecticut. For a moment, the insurance capitol of the world had become the greatest risk taker in the country. (Gaddis, 2000: 4)
- On the night of February 7, 1934, two hundred and forty people in evening dress descended into the Art Deco lobby of a subterranean theater.... Above them was the sleek white court of the most advanced museum building in America. It had just opened to the public with the country's first comprehensive Picasso show, hung in third-floor galleries against walls that have been lifted from the Bauhaus. (Gaddis, 2000: 1)



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- This celebration of the modern had drawn a glittering assemblage. They had come by private railway car, airplane, and Rolls-Royce...: Alexander Calder and Isamu Noguchi; Carl Van Vechten and Lucius Beebe; Buckminster Fuller and Clare Boothe; *New Yorker* cover artist Constantine Alajalov; Paul Rosenberg, Picasso's dealer, from Paris; and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. Having looked at nearly one hundred and fifty Picassos upstairs, they settled down to witness the first performance of an opera by Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson called *Four Saints in Three Acts*. It was directed by John Houseman—his first directing assignment—and choreographed by Fredrick Ashton, making his American professional debut. (Gaddis, 2000: 1)



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- By 1934 he had already produced America's first great Italian baroque paintings exhibition...first surrealist show, in which Salvador Dali's *Persistence of Memory* was seen for the first time in the United States.
- He fought and badgered his architects into designing the interiors of the Athenaeum's new building, the Avery Memorial, to his modernist specifications.
- He would prove himself such a trailblazer in the arts that in 1935 the French architect Le Corbusier, after visiting what became known as "Chick's museum," would call Hartford "a spiritual center of America." (Gaddis, 4-5, 2000)



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- “My first talk in America about the ideas of *Radiant City* took place in the Museum of Modern Art, and the second the following day...at Hartford, Connecticut. Hartford is a small city with has acquired a reputation through the quality of the undertakings sponsored by its very living museum, the Wadsworth Athenaeum.” (Le Corbusier 128, 1947)



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- “In Hartford...Le Corbusier came onstage... drew elegant plans and diagrams and explained his theories of housing...described houses he had built, and set forth his vision of the city of the future—a fast, efficient, airy urban center of tall buildings on stilts with glass walls, flat roofs for aerial gardens, elevated expressways, pedestrian walkways, and underground parking garages—a vision that, to more than a few was unimaginable. Even Philip Goodwin, who paid for Le Corbusier’s visit to Hartford, confided to Austin, ‘I admire the new ideas, and think we are going toward them, but to live in one of his two hundred and twenty thousand human being-honeycombs—or one of his chairs—would be hell.’ (Gaddis, 2000: 288)



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- To introduce contemporary architecture more fully to Hartford, Chick asked Hitchcock to give a public lecture at the end of the year.
- With new lantern slides from his summer in Europe flashing across a screen, Hitchcock illustrated the work of Le Corbusier, Oud, Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe, among other...
- His audience saw every kind of building in Europe that embodied the new aesthetic, from gas stations and churches to factories, houses, and museums.
- Richard Neutra, on his way back...from the International Congress of Modern Architecture in Zurich, made an unscheduled appearance...and described the radical buildings he had recently designed in Los Angeles. The Hartford audience was thus among the first in the country to hear about the International Style directly—from the scholar who named it and the architect who first realized it in America.” (Gaddis, 173-4, 2000)



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