AFTER THE MANIFESTO

WRITING, ARCHITECTURE, AND MEDIA IN A NEW CENTURY

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THERE HAS BEEN SOMETHING LIKE A MANIA for the manifesto in recent years. While only a little while ago one could still hear about the absence of manifestos in architecture, today we seem to be surrounded by them. Manifestos have been the subject of public reading marathons, taken up as themes for biennales, exhibited at galleries, exchanged for drinks, and become the subject of conferences at schools of architecture. About this resurgence, there is understandably little consensus. The urgency of the genre has returned to prominence at a moment of economic crisis and political protests over inequality, but it also appears wedded ever more intimately to official institutions of culture, which have gravitated toward performative genres in recent years. For some, the manifesto remains an archaism, the product of another century whose current revival artfully masks the fact that it has outlived its use. For others, the manifesto remains protean, a form that not only continues to remake itself but also stands to be reclaimed in our age of rapidly changing media. For still others, it is precisely the outdated, untimely qualities of the manifesto that make it so interesting at present. What does this confusing situation imply about the ongoing relevance of the manifesto form today?

After the Manifesto wrestles with such questions by bringing together a series of reflections on the history of the form in architectural culture. In looking back, rather than forward, After the Manifesto could be seen to betray the very future-oriented nature of the genre, which has vividly projected the outlines of non-extant forms, movements, and figures, and has often succeeded in bringing some version of them into the world. On the one hand, After the Manifesto registers a palpable feeling that however actual and contemporary, the manifesto form represents the legacy of a different historical moment. To think about the manifesto today is to think about where one stands relative to the boldest claims made by architects over the last century. Yet the title of the book can be understood in another sense as well, less as a time that comes after manifestos than as an interest in their aftereffects; the affirmations and rejections, replications and repressions, debates and silences, misunderstandings and recuperations that manifestos set in motion. A manifesto, after all, is a text that calls for a response, even if it is not always the one expected or desired by its authors. Paradoxically, then, while manifestos have often served as vehicles for making absolute claims, they themselves are anything but. The manifesto is a form colored and remade according to its time. A key rhetorical weapon deployed by the historical avant-gardes, the manifesto's language of rupture and revolution was an indispensable vehicle for setting transformative architectural projects in motion. At the same time, manifestos have also
been associated with some of the more problematic elements of such
vanguard positioning, from hyperbole, exhortation, and naïveté to misogyny,
racism, and sympathies for fascism. How, if at all, do these conflicting lega-
cies bear on the manifesto’s contemporary resurgence? To what extent has
the genre reformulated itself, adopting different qualities and addressing
other purposes today? Can the manifestos of the twenty-first century still
be recognized using the terms of the past?

While one may feel increasingly swamped by manifestos, it is also
ture that we remain largely ignorant about the state of the architectural
manifesto in recent decades. Although a few texts have been preserved
in collections of architectural culture and theory, no systematic effort has
been made to inventory the genre since Ulrich Conrads’s classic Programs
and Manifestos on 20th-Century Architecture (Programme und Manifeste
zur Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts), now already fifty years old.2 (1)
Conrads’s book was a rejoinder to manifestos that were in the air in the late
1950s. Appalled by what he saw as the “crass subjectivity” and “anarchical
caprice” of Friedensreich Hundertwasser’s 1958 Verschimmelungs-
manifest gegen den rationalismus in der architektur (Mould Manifesto
against Rationalism in Architecture) Conrads mounted a counter-attack
to Hundertwasser’s assault on functionalist modernism.2 (2) Confidently
slim, matter-of-fact, and prefaced by less than 300 words, Conrads’s
collection had no doubt what a manifesto was, nor which ones mattered.
When Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf compiled Theories and Manifestoes of
Contemporary Architecture roughly thirty years later, the opening salvo was
aimed at Conrads’s book, which had helped, they argued, to “turn the archi-
tectural manifesto into predictable event.”4 Jencks sought to detach the
manifesto from the avant-garde legacy, seeing it as a broader, more peren-
niel and changeable form, marked by the tension between violent flights
of rhetorical passion on the one hand, and a deep-seated, Old Testament
propensity for handing down laws, on the other.5 Despite the desire for
greater inclusiveness and a mania for categorization, the book actually
contains very few texts that are explicit manifestos.6 As a result, the vast
majority of the manifestos produced during the last fifty years remain
scattered in archives, like so much unexploded ordinance waiting to be
unearthed. The contributions collected here might be considered an initial
set of probes into such territory. They are the fruit of two daylong meetings,
the first at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning
and Preservation, and the second at the Architecture Faculty of the
University of Navarra in 2012, that brought together architects, scholars,
and editors to consider the enduring rhetorical traits, printed forms, and
modes of action of the genre.

2 Hundertwasser, Demonstration Against Rationalism in Architecture,
Vienna (1968).
Literary theorists have turned considerable attention to the form’s rhetorical conventions. A manifesto is typically a text defined by conviction, urgency, and immediacy, seeking to push the domain of words as close as possible to the domain of deeds. The force and persuasion of manifestos appear frequently in the proliferation of injunctions, formulated with modal verbs—must, can, shall, will. The temperature of such injunctions can be modulated considerably, ranging from the imperative to the subjunctive, from command and demand to a more nuanced play between desired and hypothetical states of affairs, between possibility and doubt. Such injunctions often appear in the guise of theses or numbered points; condensing thought with emphatic precision, they concentrate the effort of the text. If they are often full of points, manifestos are also fond of pointers, those pronouns indicating the place and time of utterance, as well as the objects of concern: “here,” “now,” “today,” “this.” Such pointers direct the reader toward something outside the text; indeed, the manifesto operates as a special kind of text, drawing the reader’s attention to the page in order to direct it immediately back out toward the world. As significant as the pointers are the shifters: personal pronouns like “I,” “you,” and especially “we.” The play of such pronouns has a particularly important function in manifestos. “We” remains a tricky type of plural expression; its exact referent often remains ambiguous, capable of referring to a defined group, but also to a larger, unspecified collectivity the reader is invited to join. “We” can mobilize a powerful provisional constituency, proposing forms of solidarity that can allow an individual to appear to be many, yet it is also a pronoun that can disable disagreement and run roughshod over differences.

The earliest texts to bear the name “manifesto” appear in the sixteenth century and are closely allied with the power—printed declarations by princes and kings that manifested the sovereign’s power to make decisions about war, defense, and other matters of consequence. Early religious tracts also left an enduring stamp on the form, the most famous being the ninety-five theses of Martin Luther’s 1517 Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum, which recodified elements from traditions of scholarly debate and religious revelation into a new type of militant document. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels’s 1848 Communist Manifesto effected the transformation of the modern manifesto into a tool of political struggle, consolidating and recasting the form in ways that later political and artistic manifestos would continue to echo and rework. The modern genre of the manifesto could thus be seen to occupy and take hold of a particular rupture in authority, one associated both with the breakdown of royal control over the reproduction of the printed word and royal entitlement to the form itself. The royal manifesto was a document that confirmed word as deed, publicly displaying the power of the sovereign’s declaration. The rise of the modern political and revolutionary manifesto in the nineteenth century reverses these dynamics, such that the manifesto becomes a form for challenging rather than confirming the legitimacy of a particular authority. As Martin Puchner has insightfully argued, revolutionary manifestos like that of Marx and Engels can be seen as speech acts that lacked the authority to sanction their words as deed, and thus necessarily projected this union into a revolutionary future. On the one hand such projection called forth of a subject, party, group, or class, which would emerge to realize the authority of the manifesto. Yet such a notion could also help to think about the performativity of much of the twentieth-century’s manifesto architecture. From Antonio Sant’Elia’s drawings of Futurist transport stations in 1914 to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s 1921 Glass Skyscraper photomontages, and beyond, manifesto projects are projects cast toward the future, figures that the architectural imagination will chase for years before they will be realized in built form.

If the projective capacities of the manifesto are undoubtedly powerful, to read manifestos only as declarations of polemical confidence and law-like clarity would be to miss their often intimate connection to uncertainty, to overlook those moments in which they point us to sources of doubt and objects of concern. Manifestos, after all, have flourished in times of trouble; in the lead-up to World War I and in its aftermath, amid the rubble after World War II, and again from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s, a period marked by the wars of decolonization and Vietnam, the rise of terrorism, and environmental and energy crises. In this sense, the manifesto remains a more ambivalent genre that one might expect. As Puchner reminds us, on the one hand, the writer of the manifesto could never summon the courage to seize the authority that he or she does not, yet possess without a type of theatrical confidence. At the same time, such claims are haunted by their own theatricality, afraid that the necessary illusions sustaining a belief in the forward thrust of modernity will turn out to be an empty promise. As the manifesto is relayed more intensely in our own time, we might ask what new performative figures will it call onto the scene? By the same token, we might ask, what types of authority, existing or yet to be realized, are being appealed to?

One source of the manifesto’s renewed appeal may be a recognition of the important role it has played in making claims upon the discipline. The contributions compiled here highlight a wide spectrum of such claims, to which can be added a selection of examples drawn from manifestos
that have, to greater or lesser extent, marked the course of architectural culture over the last half-century. While by no means exhaustive or exclusive, these brief examples can be grouped into four broad types of recurring claims: claims upon history, claims upon hierarchies within the field, claims on forms of collective identity, and claims on the very media that circulate manifestos.

For a genre so often associated with the future, manifestos frequently ground their claims in attacks on prevailing ideas about history, provoking by means of condensed, biased, and often extreme forms of historical revision. The opening line of Antonio Sant'Elia and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 1914 "Futurist Architecture (L'architettura Futurista)" set a high bar: "Since the Eighteenth century there has been no more architecture."¹⁰ (3) While few postwar manifestos tempt a similar level of bombast, they too stake their claims upon historical revision. Asger Jorn's 1954 exchange with Max Bill over the newly founded Hochschule für Gestaltung at Ulm called for an "artistic revolution to confront the dead language of cubism and constructivism."¹¹ (4) Jorn aimed to destroy what he saw as an academic recuperation of prewar avant-gardes, even as he sought to claim aspects of this legacy for his own purposes. While coming from a entirely different perspective, Archigram magazine's first editorial in 1961 invoked a similar sentiment, vowing to "bypass the decaying Bauhaus image..."
an insult to functionalism.\textsuperscript{12} (5) In both cases, to remain true to a revolutionary history meant turning against its contemporary legacy. Still others invoked historical rupture related not to the legacy of the avant-garde, but to technological change. As the sixties drew to a close in Japan, Kisho Kurokawa’s “Capsule Declaration” (1969) announced the arrival of Cyborg architecture: “Almost all devices which have been introduced into human society since the Industrial Revolution perform the role of a tool... Cyborg architecture, on the other hand, is an object in itself. The human being in the capsule and the film which protects his life constitute a new existence.”\textsuperscript{12}

(6) As José Manuel Pozo reminds us, not all postwar manifestos spoke the language of rupture; the form was equally taken up to advance more conservative agendas. In Spain under General Franco’s dictatorship, the Manifiesto de la Alhambra (1953) reinterpreted this monument as an urgent and timely manifesto for contemporary Spanish architecture at the very moment that the country was beginning to reopen to the winds of international culture. And as Enrique Walker argues, in the aftermath of the tumultuous decade of the 1960s the manifesto was not rejected outright, but rather its relationship to history underwent a radical reversal, most emblazoned in what Rem Koolhaas has dubbed the “retroactive manifesto.” Whereas manifestos typically announce an agenda in advance of any evidence that might sustain their claims, the retroactive genre proceeds by deducing a manifesto from assembled historical evidence. Walker’s assessment of the current situation remains pessimistic; if the genre of the retroactive manifesto has increasingly become a cliché, and the classic manifesto has been subjected to a revival, both forms have largely absconded from their original task: advancing arguments within the field.

Alongside such polemical claims on history, manifestos have also taken aim at reigning hierarchies, provoking doubt about the ways in which the field separates the central from the marginal, and the consequential from the trivial. The brief, eight-point “Doom Manifesto” (1954)—by a group of young architects who would form the kernel of Team Ten—begins with a strident embrace of the larger complexities of human association and community: “It is useless to consider the house except as a part of a community owing to the interaction of these on each other.”\textsuperscript{13} (7) The effort
to reconceptualize community seized on a term that had been left out of the hierarchy of urban functions defined by the 1933 Athens Charter, and was calculated as the opening salvo in an effort to decisively reform the Congrès Internationale d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). As Anthony Vidler boldly suggests, while the "Doorn Manifesto" aimed to mark a new beginning, it may actually mark the closing of a cycle—the last of the modern genre. In architecture, he argues, not only are such manifestos more rare than we care to believe, since the mid-1950s the cultural politics of the field have steadily gravitated away from such manifesto statements and toward forms of discourse more closely associated with the tradition of the treatise. The 1960s, however, did see a wide range of different claims that sought to challenge the limits of the discipline, perhaps none as maximal as Hans Hollein's 1968 manifesto "Alles ist Architektur" ("Everything is Architecture").

When everything from pills to television broadcasts, and from pyramids to space capsules can be understood as architecture, disciplinary boundaries become nearly impossible to draw. Here a polemical questioning of cultural hierarchy was aligned with a shift in architectural attitude, from a strict concentration on buildings to an experimental appraisal of the architectural implications of diverse types of objects, media, and technological systems. Felicity Scott turns our attention to the 1970s and early 1980s, drawing on three very different documents that remain outside of existing anthologies—the Morningstar Commune's "Open Land" manifesto (1970), Leslie Kanes Weisman's "Women's Environmental Rights: A Manifesto" (1981), and Luc Deleu's "Urban Planning Manifesto" (1980). In each case, she highlights how environmental concerns not normally seen as central to the discipline—from building regulations to gender norms and communications media—were mobilized tactically by these manifestos in order to highlight, challenge, and temporarily evade forms of control embedded in architecture's more mundane juridical codes and institutional procedures. It was also during the second half of the 1970s that Bernard Tschumi reappropriated the manifesto form at the very moment when it seemed to be falling out of favor. As he reminds us here, his series of architectural manifestos exhibited in New York and London were crucial early links in a project he has pursued ever since: the identification of architecture with the making of concepts, rather than forms, contexts, or materials. In these manifestos Tschumi went beyond the marginal to stake a claim on the repressed and the taboo. Calling attention to perversity, transgression, and excess was a bid to reveal, and thus open to question, the ever-shifting dynamics around the definition of rules in architecture, together with the moral economies subtending such definitions.
If manifestos have been a platform for challenging established hierarchies of knowledge, they have also served to support the formation of new identities. As Mark Wigley suggests, the “we” in a manifesto is less the designation of the group authoring the statement than a pact of complicity the author seeks with the reader. The condition of possibility for the formation of such new groups often depends on how compellingly a manifesto constructs the image of an older group or existing situation. The “real art” of the manifesto, he continues, lies less in commotion or uproar than in “making it seem that the world is still—waiting for the manifesto.” Some of the starkest examples can be found in the militant documents that issued from the occupations and strikes of architectural students in the years around 1968. (10) Consider, for instance, the open letter to André Malraux issued by the occupiers of the Order of French Architects, which demanded “...the abrogation of the Order of French Architects’ law of foundation, dictated by the Vichy government in 1940. Our new structures are being elaborated at the heart of the new autonomous and critical university, through the permanent confrontation between workers, students, architecture-teachers, and user’s associations.”

Calling into question the legitimacy of the existing, official body of the profession—whose origins were a legacy of France’s collaborationist Vichy government—the statement quickly shifts from present to future, uniting the disparate range of identities within the “we”—workers, students, teachers, user groups—in the task of building a new, autonomous, self-managed university. By no means, however, were all affirmations of such shared identities as explicitly oppositional. The postwar years also saw new forms of identification attuned to the period’s fascination with biology and cybernetics, particularly as metaphors for processes of continuous change, feedback, and growth. In Noboru Kawazoé’s introduction to the “Metabolist Manifesto” (1960), biological processes of change were offered as a model for a renewal of architectural form, but also for a more flexible type of group identity: “The reason we use such a biological word, metabolism, is that we believe design and technology should be a designation of human vitality... In the future, more will come to join ‘Metabolism’ and some will go: that ensures a metabolic process will also take place in its membership.”

As Carlos Labarta and Jorge Tárrago point out, the postwar breakup of official bodies formed at an earlier moment of modernity, such as CIAM, allowed for a changed attitude to manifestos. Official charters and collective declarations gave way to groups linked by a more informal exchange of individual statements, as can be seen in the correspondence organized in Jaap Bakema’s “Post Box for Habitat Development.” (12) It remains a historical irony that perhaps the most widely read manifesto to emerge from postwar Spain—José Antonio

11 Page spreads from Metabolism: Proposals for a New Urbanism (1960). Known as the “Metabolist Manifesto.”

le carré bleu

Cover of Le carré bleu no. 3/4, (1968) Special issue dedicated to May 1968.

metabolism

AFTER THE MANIFESTO
Coderch’s “It Is Not Geniuses We Need Now” (1961)—began as a letter circulated through this epistolary network, only acquiring the status of a manifesto through subsequent publication, reprints, and copies. Such an example draws attention to the important role of mechanical reproduction; indeed, the history of the manifesto is inextricable from efforts to create new spaces of operation by means of changing media forms. Rubén Alcolea and Héctor García-Diego trace the growing role of photographic reproductions in print media during the 1920s, which was of central importance to architectural manifestos. Proposing the category of the “photo-manifesto” to cover a range of seminal publications by figures such as Le Corbusier, Erich Mendelsohn, and El Lissitzky, they highlight how the process of collecting, organizing, and captioning photographic images overtakes the older linguistic conventions of the genre. As Beatriz Colomina reminds us, the manifesto cannot be separated from the little magazines, journals, and newspapers in which they were published, nor from the role such documents played in creating the very identities of many architects and avant-garde groups. Even a figure like Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who is often thought of as an architect of few words, completely transforms himself in the early 1920s by forging a link between manifesto texts and manifesto projects, radically redefining the course of his work, and of modern architecture, in ways that continue to be revisited and rewritten. Citing SANAA’s 2008 project for Mies’s Barcelona Pavilion, she proposes the emergence of a new genre—the soft manifesto—an endgame to the long sequence of buildings, journals, and texts through which the twentieth century’s manifesto architecture evolved. Such an endgame can also be seen as a moment of transition. As communications media in our own day continue to transform our sense of space and time in ways as drastic as those of the 1920s or the 1960s, what changed forms might the

manifesto inhabit, and what new experiences might it claim for architectural thinking?

The question returns us to the initial impetus for this collection—what does the longer history of the manifesto enable one to think as it undergoes its present resurgence? From the mid-nineteenth century onward, the manifesto emerged as a mode for capturing attention amid the growing flood of documents and information unleashed by mass print culture. If it took its impetus from the urgencies of the day, the manifesto also took its measure from the most immediate, cheap, and ephemeral media available—the pamphlet, the newspaper, the little magazine, the broadsheet, the poster—media that could reduce the amount of time separating the creation of a message from its transmission to a mass public. Its visual cues have been drawn more often from the world of advertising and mass communication than from the book. The book, Alphonse de Lamartine pointed out as early as 1830, was already too slow to keep up with the rapid changes of the nineteenth century; the future of writing lay with the newspaper. When Marshall McLuhan repeated Lamartine’s words, some 120 years later, newspapers and magazines had long secured their dominance, and were in turn becoming acutely aware of competition from the more instantaneous media of radio and television. In our own time, the gap between writer and public has been compressed even more radically. And while none are the same, all of these media forms continue to exist, however tenuously, today. Once separate media are undergoing a massive convergence and recombination through online forms of distribution, channeling a vastly expanded stream of changeable information, filtered by interfaces that appear and disappear, mutate and reconfigure at a rate only slightly slower than the things they convey. The modern genre of the manifesto crystallized within this same historical horizon, and it, too, remains with us—it’s history a set of landmarks on the battleground for attention. This struggle for attention may have a special meaning for architects, whose intellectual work must operate across a remarkably broad spectrum of time, from the extremely fast to the agonizingly slow. In an era that prizes instantaneity, the materialization of buildings remains a time-consuming affair. Architectural thinking is stretched between the actuality of the present—the temporality of drawing and writing, of journals and books, of emails and faxes, of blogs and tweets—and the schedules of builders, the production times of manufacturers, the deliberations of competitions and commissions, the credit lines of clients, and the crises and cycles of the broader economy. Paradoxically, might the most urgent message of past manifestos today be not to move faster, but rather to claim

12 Letters exchanged in Jaap Bakema’s “Post Box for Habitat Development.”
more time in a period when it seems in ever-shorter supply? Not to think quicker, but to think longer and harder? Architectural thought, subject as it is to immediate demands and incessant delays, may be in a unique position to reexamine the dynamics of attention in our present era. If the manifesto has long sought to capture and communicate the urgency of the actual, it is also one of those few forms that can be traced across the longer history of architectural modernity. In this, it might even be seen as a special type of relay, one that transmits such urgent signals forward in time, but which also encapsulates the past’s claims on the future, in words and forms that aim to be the barometer against which some future present will take its measure.

1 The number of events in recent years themed as, or devoted to, manifestos is too numerous to inventory. One of the earliest events to mark this resurgence was the Manifesto Marathon organized in the Frank Gehry-designed Serpentine Pavilion in 2008. In 2009, the Manifesto project (http://www.manifestoproject.it) began gathering and exhibiting design manifestos in galleries around the Europe. In 2010, New York’s Stroemfelt for Art and Architecture initiated its manifesto series, an ongoing set of events devoted to the articulation of new positions in the field. In 2000, the Architectural Association, London, advertised an event in which each presented manifesto (of not more than one minute) was rewarded with a free beer. As I write this text, the upcoming 2014 Istanbul Design Biennial has invited participants from around the world to submit manifestos, asking how the manifesto can be "reclaimed for the 21st century."


3 Ibid.


6 As Anthony Vidler points out in this volume, there is only one text in the book that explicitly announces itself as a manifesto. Composed almost solely of excerpts from longer works, Jencks and Kropf's compendium may be seen as a testament to a masterful form of manifesto editing, one that expertly extracts the most prescriptive moments from much longer, more analytical, and more nuanced, articles, books, and catalogues.


9 Ibid., 26.

10 Antonio Sant'Elia and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Futurist Architecture" (1914), in Conrads, Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture, 34–38.


