

PANS, ART, AND ARCHITECTURE

Theo van Doesburg and the Question of the “Aesthetic Unity of all the Arts”

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The research of past decades has often counted the Dutch De Stijl group of artists and Theo van Doesburg, the group's founder and sole unabated advocate, as being among those artists who were interested in creating a synthesis of the arts. Under the new auspices of the European avant-gardes of the Interwar period, the allied artists presumably strove to resolve the separation of individual art forms in favor of a higher-ranking whole. In his seminal 1988 book on Theo van Doesburg, Evert van Straaten explicitly commented on this goal, whose true ideal was “the unification of all arts to form a ‘Gesamtkunstwerk.’”¹ But this aspect has also been taken up several times in more recent research, broadening the synthesis of the arts to include the notion of synesthesia. The works of the De Stijl artists “were not just supposed to cross-fertilize; *De Stijl's* vision ultimately called for their synaesthetic fusion.”² Building on the ideas of the Wiener Werkstätte, De Stijl and the Bauhaus were both interested in abolishing the divisions between the various artistic disciplines as well as between the applied and fine arts.³



1 Theo van Doesburg, self-portrait in front of his easel (1902).

A reading of the texts from the magazine *De Stijl*—especially those written by Van Doesburg—is not entirely so clear-cut in exactly this regard. Indeed, the publication *De Stijl*—which, in the absence of direct connections among the artists, constituted the group’s actual meeting place—covered all the various sectors within the visual, applied, and performing arts, and also included thoroughly literary or

scientifically oriented texts. Van Doesburg did not explicitly comment on the subject of the total work of art, however, and did not draw a connection between it and the work of the De Stijl group, either—which is, to my mind, a basic problem with any historically sound use of the term and with the projection of the concept onto artistic working methods. In point of fact, terms like “communal art” (*Gemeenschapskunst*), “collective,” “supraindividual,” and “universal” art are used in *De Stijl*. In individual aspects, these each appear to indicate that the objective was an artistic synthesis, of some kind whatsoever, of the arts in one location or one work. Such a reading is problematic, however, not only because of the ambiguity of the terms or pairs of terms used by the De Stijl artists—but also because of the vagueness of the concept of a “total work of art.” But in pinning things down, difficulties arise, primarily from the shift that occurs in the interests and theoretical positions that Van Doesburg held over the years.

Consequently, we should not concern ourselves with applying various theories of a total work of art to the work and theory of Theo van Doesburg, but instead examine his writings in order to pursue his idea of an aesthetic unity of the arts, which appears to be closely allied with the idea of the total work of art.⁴

1923—Unity/Synthesis

In a manifesto written together with his artist friend Cornelis van Eesteren in 1923/1924, Theo van Doesburg had spoken of the starting point of architecture as being an aesthetic unity of all the arts, thereby apparently suggesting an affinity with the theme of a total work of art.⁵ Even the fact that the text was published three times with slight shifts in wording and with generally imprecise French and German, as well thoroughly idiosyncratic Dutch, harbors problems—beyond its incorrect and confusing comma placement. That’s because even though the text of the undated flyer, subtitled “Manifesto V,” initially consolidated the three fields of art, industry, and technology, the subsequent version in *De Stijl* with the enigmatic title “ $-\square+=R_4$ ” reverses this by separating the latter two back out. The inscrutable title of this brief text is also outstandingly well suited to putting a real damper on the will for scientific clarity in interpreting artistic manifestos. That’s because in their text, Van Doesburg and Van Eesteren do not explain the meaning of their seemingly mathematical formula. Elsewhere, in the aphorisms to his “sur-humanist” novel, *The Other Face*, Van Doesburg stated that R_4 meant “a superphysically-extended-I (R_4 -I)” that develops “from point-I ... to line-I, from line-I to plane-I, from plane-I to body-I, from body-I to the superphysically-extended-I.”⁶ But do the two instances of R_4 —which occur in highly specific texts on completely different

subjects—even mean the same thing? Can unresolved issues from one of Van Doesburg’s texts really be explained by what appear to be pertinent parts of another?

In other, nearly contemporaneous texts, the prolific Dutch writer declares, without further direct comments, that architecture is the “synthesis of a new design.” But specifically in the texts from the early 1920s, one can actually filter out a consistent attitude on the subject of “synthesis”: For Van Doesburg, architecture is the collective art form in which—without individual art forms like painting and sculpture, which are now superfluous, but necessarily with the enlistment of individual specialized artistic skills—a harmonious three-dimensional whole comes into being: “a consistent design of our surroundings.”⁷ Van Doesburg sees the architect as a “conductor” who orchestrates “the materials and the colors as well as the objects in the space as a kind of overall structure [*Gesamtkonstruktion*].”⁸ But even if this now reads like a declaration of intent focusing on the total work of art, here again it is simply a matter of forming a pure analogy. For Van Doesburg’s understanding of architecture, in which color, space, and time constitute the key factors, the concept of the total work of art is not relevant at this point.

Hence in the face of this situation, which is ambiguous in detail, we shall first concentrate once again on the aspect repeatedly mentioned in connection with the total work of art for both the Bauhaus and De Stijl in equal measure: that architecture is the site of the synthesis of the arts. On exactly this point, it appears that contemporaneous thoughts of other artists appear to have an affinity with Van Doesburg’s remarks. The “Bauhaus Manifesto” of 1919, formulated by Walter Gropius, took a rather unambiguous position on the role of architecture in the interplay of the arts: “The ultimate aim of all visual arts is the complete building! To embellish buildings was once the noblest function of the fine arts; they were the indispensable components of great architecture. Today the arts exist in isolation, from which they can be rescued only through the conscious, cooperative effort of all craftsmen.” The ensuing program goes on to say: “The Bauhaus strives to bring together all creative effort into one whole, to reunify all the disciplines of practical art—sculpture, painting, handicrafts, and the crafts—as inseparable components of a new architecture. The ultimate, if distant, aim of the Bauhaus is the unified work of art—the great structure—in which there is no distinction between monumental and decorative art.”⁹

One of the possible direct starting points for this program is found in Henry van de Velde’s essay on the “Synthese der Kunst” (Synthesis of Art) from 1899: “Before painting and sculpture split apart from architecture in order to lead their separate lives as paintings and statues ... they belonged to that trinity which, together with architecture, constituted the unity of art.”¹⁰ Here, van de Velde identified unity or

the synthesis of all the arts as the goal to strive for, with explicit inclusion of “the industrial applied arts.” He did not, however, really mean a specific place where everything must work together, but was referring instead to “similar aspirations,” to the unconditional recognition and equal treatment of all art forms as well as their shared creative direction. These aspects are also likely to have been familiar to Theo van Doesburg, who refers, after all, to van de Velde in several of his texts as a kind of forefather of modern design.

Beyond what are certainly also pertinent theories of the total work of art, however, Victor Hugo’s passage from *Notre Dame de Paris* from 1831 also bears a resemblance to the aforementioned positions.¹¹ Here one finds the widely read precursor for the idea and the concept of an interaction of all the arts and artists under the umbrella of medieval architecture that had already been lost through the media revolution of the fifteenth century: “All the material forces, all the intellectual forces of society converged towards the same point: architecture ... All other arts obeyed, and placed themselves under the discipline of architecture. They were the workmen of the great work.”¹² In the French original, Hugo used the term “grand oeuvre.” In their writings after the First World War, Walter Gropius as well as Bruno Taut and Adolf Behne refer numerous times to this “great building” (Gropius), the “great architecture” and the “great cathedral” (Taut), a “great will” or even directly as the “great work” (Adolf Behne).

But it is only Adolf Behne who, in Bruno Taut’s book *Die Stadtkrone* (City Crown), uses the already well-worn idea of the total work of art, and in so doing, does not so much emphasize the primacy of architecture as he does the higher unity of the interaction of the arts: “Despite all the misunderstandings, the total work of art is the goal—not, of course, that which is assembled of parts, that which never gets beyond the sum of its parts—but instead that which, regardless of which and how many resources it draws upon, nevertheless strikes a chord of resonance, because it starts from a height in which everything is a collected entity. Thus Weber’s ‘Oberon’ emerges from unity, whereas the work of Richard Wagner strives for unity.”¹³

Let us momentarily consider: the aforementioned protagonists are convinced of the necessity for a synthesis of the arts and the abolition of art forms and artists that, in their view, work in isolation. Although a precise elaboration in aesthetic, social, or formal terms is lacking for the superordinate architectural end product, it is concordantly indicated, even though the concept of the total work of art is not mentioned—if one disregards the patently divergent passage by the art historian Adolf Behne.

Van Doesburg’s thoughts initially seem similar. In his influential text “Der Wille zum Stil” (The Will to Style)—which had its beginnings as lectures held in 1922

in Jena, Weimar, and Berlin—he summed up by stating that the goal of the efforts is to develop a new style with modern means, and in accordance with advances in technology: “With the new art plastic expression becomes more profound, abstract, and related to architecture. The striving for an elementary style based on elementary means ... runs parallel to a progressive development of form in technology.” According to Van Doesburg, the new style promotes the “impersonal combination of all arts which will achieve a harmonic unity,” but it can only take place in an art form that brings color, space, and time into harmony—“in the scenic composition of three-dimensional space”—in other words: in architecture. As the overriding goal, however, he does not identify the emergence of an ideal, let alone the ideal of a “great” work as propagated by Behne. Nevertheless, “monumental synthesis through exclusively artistic means” occurs with and in architecture. Instead, he launches a frontal attack against medieval cathedrals and Greek temples: “Neither the transcendentalism of the Middle Ages, nor the reconstruction of Olympus as advertised by several art historians can provide us with a solution.” And even when the call for “unity of art and life” sounds like it comes from the Darmstadt Artists’ Colony in Mathildenhöhe, Van Doesburg’s stated context of “a reconstruction of European intellectual life” has indeed moved far away from the bourgeois utopia of the reform movements from the turn of the century.¹⁴ Both Van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian ultimately imagined a time in which art would be unnecessary because it will have dispersed into real life. The universal harmony that both men dreamt of thus exists in a utopian-conceptual form in the dissolution of the work and in a utopian-practical form in the creation of a better living environment for people—through urban planning, architecture, art, or even through furniture, which would, as a commodity, replace “individual sculptures.”¹⁵

Even in 1925, at a time when Van Doesburg had long since been engaged with purely theoretical architectural considerations, he still identified the “harmonious whole” as the goal of artistic creation. Under the label “Architecture as the Synthesis of a New Design,” he compulsively united all artists in his notion of a new architecture in which autonomous, individual works of art are no longer necessary. This new architecture has “the task of being the total expression of all of our physical and spiritual needs.”¹⁶ Despite differences with the aforementioned German-speaking representatives, Van Doesburg also ascribes eminent importance to architecture, and this stance culminates in his art-theoretical assertion that “painting, without architectural construction (that is, easel painting), has no further reason for existence.”¹⁷ Here, at the very latest, Piet Mondrian saw himself compelled to take a position. In his article “Muss [die] Malerei der Architektur gegenüber als minderwertig gelten?” (Must painting be regarded as inferior to

architecture?) of the same year (1923), Mondrian propagated the equivalence of architecture and painting, but also the possible entwined development of the two art forms.¹⁸

1930—Absolute Clarity

Just seven years later, in 1930, a few months prior to his untimely death, Van Doesburg had reached a fundamentally different position in his thoughts about the relationship of the art forms. In April, the first and only issue of *Art concret*, a magazine that would do more than just lastingly define the term “concrete art” for the first time, was published. In addition, *Art concret* also represented the final radicalization of Van Doesburg’s art theory, in which he now pleaded for an autonomous position for painting with respect to all other forms of artistic expression. *Art concret* called for a rejection of emotional and intuitive artistic work, demanding instead that it should be based on conceptual work and that it not permit any happenstance whatsoever in the process of creating a painting. Van Doesburg and his allies called for “clarté absolu”—absolute clarity in every respect. This demand for pure, independent painting—architecture, design, or other art forms were not even mentioned in his new magazine—did not, however, stop Van Doesburg from concluding his radical pamphlet with a Dadaist invitation to purchase airships, embellished with a picture of the LZ 127 Graf Zeppelin.

Van Doesburg wrote the manifesto for the Art concret group while still completing his own house in Meudon, and closer examination reveals that his idea of concrete art is borrowed in parts from architectural design processes: “Most painters work like pastry-cooks and milliners. In contrast we use mathematical data (whether Euclidean or not) and science, that is to say, intellectual means.”¹⁹ If van Doesburg’s architectural design as well as his architectural theory both emanated from painting and its essential artistic means, the painterly premises about the rigor of the architectural design were now sharpened: “The work of art must be entirely conceived and formed by the mind before its execution. It must receive nothing from nature’s given forms, or from sensuality, or sentimentality. We wish to exclude lyricism, dramaticism, symbolism, etc. ... A pictorial element has no other meaning than ‘itself.’”²⁰

Van Doesburg’s “concrete art” arose in direct correspondence with his architectural design activities, which can be illustrated by comparing his painting *Arithmetic Composition* from 1930 with an axonometric drawing of his house. In addition to an easily seen formal analogy of two diagonally offset squares on an underlying grid—as the actual basic structure in one and implied as a planning grid for the tile floor in



2 Theo van Doesburg, self-portrait in front of *Simultaneous Composition XXII*, 1929/1930.

the other—the basic idea behind the two different artistic expressions is one of progression, or a “shift” “from surface to space,” as Van Doesburg called this “space-time construction” in a publication on abstract film, which he illustrated with the design scheme for the *Arithmetic Composition*.²¹ The fact that the *Arithmetic Composition* was placed on the very studio wall of the house in Meudon, which is featured in the axonometric’s architectural progression, consolidates this situation even more and serves to illustrate Doesburg’s concept of a universal, non-artistic form:

*In contrast with all previous styles, the new architectural method does not recognize any self-contained type, any basic form. The subdivision of the functional spaces is strictly determined by rectangular planes, which possess no individual forms in themselves, since, although they are limited (the one plane by the other), they can be imagined extended into infinity, thereby forming a system of coordinates, the different points of which would correspond to an equal number of points in universal, open space. From this it follows that the planes possess a direct tensile relationship with open (exterior) space.*²²

A universal form is controllable, as Van Doesburg clarified in a letter to his friend, the poet Anthony Kok, because it is calculated mathematically.²³ In the wake of Van Doesburg's architectural experiences, concrete art becomes a planned, constructed art. Art created this way is contemporary and more like a product of engineering—such as the Zeppelin—than romantic individualized art.

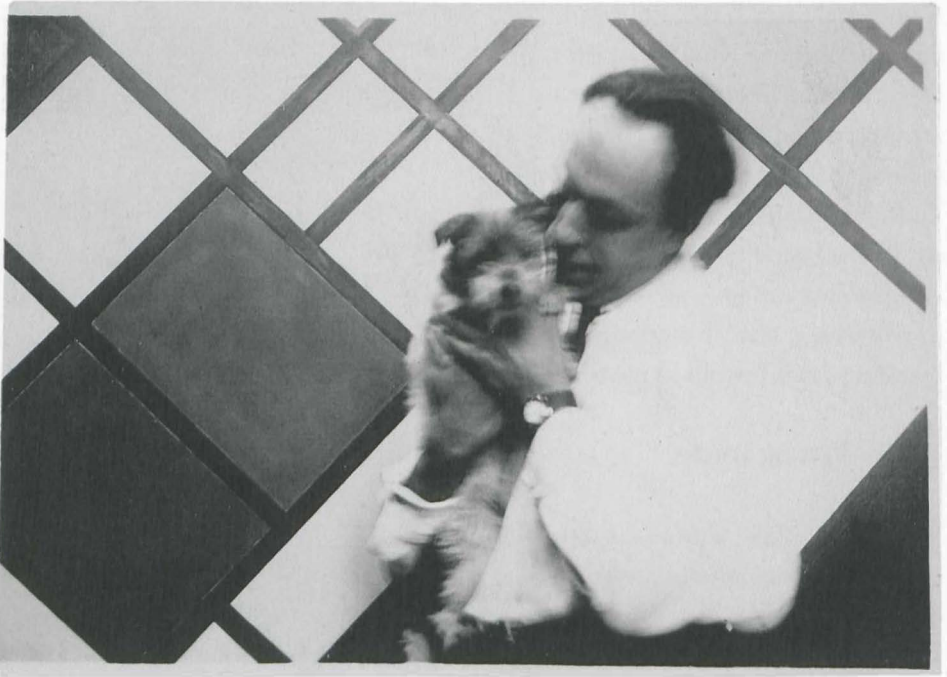
Thus, both in his work and in his texts, we can observe that Van Doesburg's different fields of activity—spanning the realms of painting, architecture, graphic design, and product design—are closely intertwined, yet this relationship does not lead to synesthetic concepts or superordinate ideals in terms of a total work of art, but manifests itself instead in the use of analogous design principles.

1927—Wrong Tracks

We therefore take aim at the chronological middle of the problem, which, upon closer inspection, also turns out to be the substantive center between the two poles described, and in which a sharpening of Theo van Doesburg's theory can be found. In the anniversary issue of *De Stijl*, which celebrated its ten-year existence in 1927, Van Doesburg summed up by stating that now an elementary design must be the goal of their efforts, and no longer the search for stylistic unity: "To interpret it in a paradoxical way: the De Stijl idea as the idea of a new style ... is meaningless and anachronistic. The De Stijl idea as the dissolution of all styles within one elementary plasticism is significant, spiritually alive, and in advance of its time."²⁴ At nearly the same time, he also relativized the importance of architecture as the site of a synthesis of the arts, now suggesting exactly the opposite, namely that the two art forms could not come together: "Elementarism completely excludes architecture as art. From years of experiment and research it has been found that art and architecture are completely different and incompatible factors. Elementarism is consciously striving for the end of arts and crafts."²⁵

It seems prudent to take Doesburg's radical reassessment and new rejection of previously held views and reconcile them with his work, because precisely at the time he formulated these assertions, Van Doesburg, together with his friends Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Hans Arp, was planning his first major interior: the redesign and refurbishment of *Café de l'Aubette* in Strasbourg, turning it into an entertainment complex with a movie theater and dance hall, as well as bar and café spaces. *L'Aubette* was again characterized just a few years ago as a synthesis of the arts and a total work of art.²⁶

Doesburg conceived a "bâtiment de passage" (place of passage), as he himself dubbed joint work, forming a contiguous sequence of spatial paintings.²⁷ Two rooms each



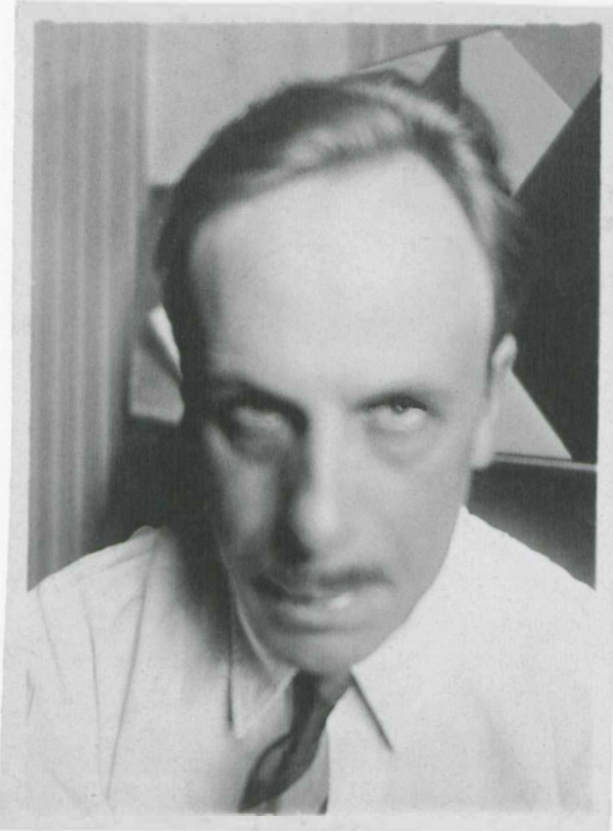
3 Theo van Doesburg, self-portrait with his dog Dada in front of *Contra-composition XVI*, 1925.

by Van Doesburg and Taeuber-Arp were realized, along with one by Hans Arp and a collectively designed staircase. The spatial painting that Van Doesburg sought centers around moving people:

The track of man in space (from the left to the right, from front to back, from above to below) has become of fundamental importance for painting in architecture. ... In this painting the idea is not to lead man along a painted surface of a wall, in order to let him observe the pictorial development of space from one wall to the other, but the problem is to evoke the simultaneous effect of painting and architecture. ... The whole should be treated as a fixed body.²⁸

The typography and signage were also designed by Van Doesburg, and some of the furnishings, such as the tables, were custom designed or available standard products were modified slightly—a common procedure at the time. Some of his designs, such as those for two bentwood chairs (Aubette 162 and Aubette 141), were not realized, probably for reasons of cost. Instead, photographs showed the Thonet

chair No. 18 as well as other mass-produced wooden chairs. Van Doesburg himself wrote about these furnishings: “no artistic effect was sought”—in other words, rejecting applied art in favor of industrial production.²⁹ It is not difficult to situate Van Doesburg’s design theory as an outgrowth of the ideas of Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, with their rejection of artistic and artisanal designs for mass production.



4 Theo van Doesburg, self-portrait in front of *Contra-composition XIII*, 1926.

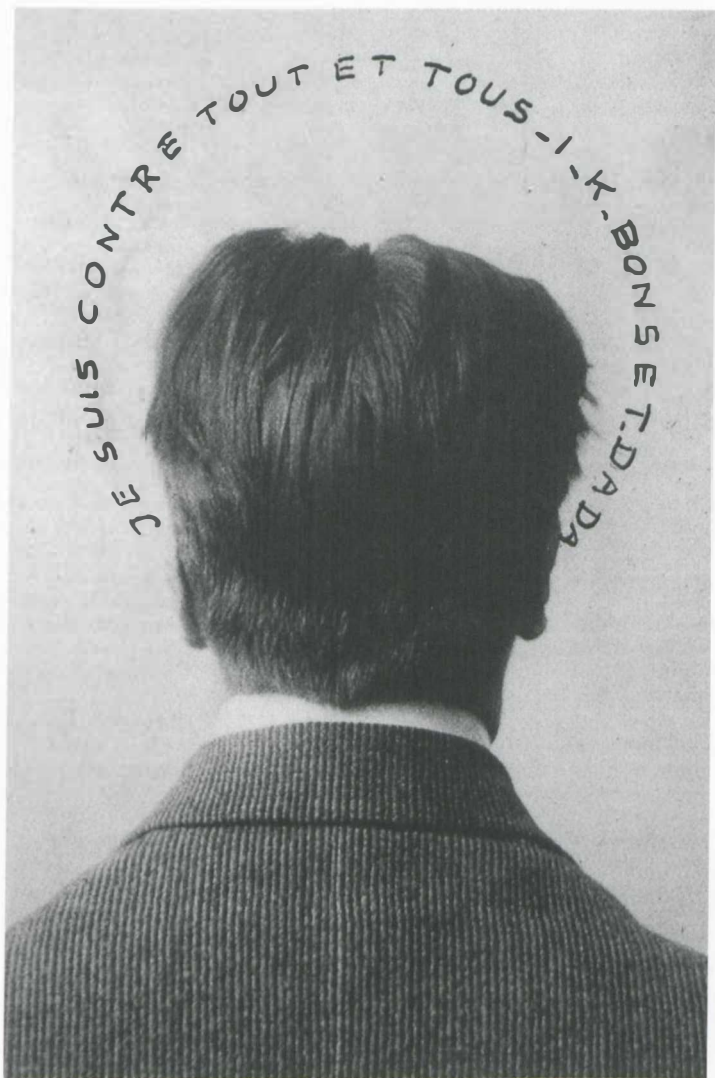
Van Doesburg summarized the elementarism he used here as a “universal method” that applies to the arts as well as industrial production and could therefore impart a designed unity upon both. Whereas in 1925 architecture still meant “the total expression of our lives” and of our “needs,”³⁰ he wrote in a now considerably more sober tone that architecture synthesizes all the functions of human life.³¹

The conservative Strasbourg public did not take a liking to the collective work of the three friends, meaning the Aubette was a flop with the local audience. In 1928, Van Doesburg wrote in frustration to Adolf Behne: “Constant values are created only by 100% art. That is now my firm conviction. Architecture is on the wrong track, as is applied art.”³² And in his journal he added: “Architecture must be neutral, formless.”³³ Thus by the end of 1928 at the latest, Theo van Doesburg had reached a point where he excluded architecture from his reflections on art and established a clear dividing line between fine art and other, applied fields of design, to which he included applied art, (what we today call) industrial design, and, above all, architecture. This notion—that the free and the applied arts should be two distinct areas of human creation with different end products—ultimately pervades Theo van Doesburg’s theory and he found an abundantly clear way to express it in the anniversary issue of *De Stijl*: “A chair becomes a chair, a table becomes a table, a house becomes a house, that is, a utilitarian object and nothing more; an advertisement, an ordinary advertisement, like a pan, will never be art.”³⁴ Poignantly formulated and applied to the Aubette, however, this means that Theo van Doesburg’s ashtrays, chairs, and typography are pans, not art, and the Aubette is a utilitarian object—according to its chief designer’s concept—whose spatial sequences are formed of spatio-temporal artworks, but which nevertheless does not constitute a total work of art.

1923—Separation

In a strict sense, however, this was simply the final radicalization of Doesburg’s long-expressed belief that a difference exists between art and other forms of design. This separation of genres had frequently been a subject, especially since developing his key art-theoretical notion of the basic elements of modern art (*Generalbassl Grondelement*). In the July 1923 inaugural issue of the magazine *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung* (*G: Material for Elemental Form-Creation*), Van Doesburg first promulgated the three basic elements of architecture, sculpture, and painting, explicitly targeting a “generalization of means” and an “elemental expressive means” for the visual arts as well as architecture:

*As early as 1916 we set the first and most important requisite: separation of the different realms of formation. In contrast to a still-rampant baroque (even in modern art), we have held that the formative arts must be separated from each other. Without this sharp division (sculpture from painting; painting from architecture, etc.) it is impossible to create order out of the chaos or to become acquainted with the elemental means of formation.*³⁵



5 Theo van Doesburg, self-portrait as I. K. Bonset: "Je suis contre tout et tous," 1921.

It would be of interest at this point to make a comparison to a sequence that was published exactly ten years later, in which the art historian Emil Kaufmann comments on the subject of the baroque and total works of art in his book *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier*: "The interaction of the two motifs of aesthetic merger and social differentiation results in an overall form, which has its beginnings in the Renaissance, but only reaches its purest form in the Baroque, hence we call it *baroque*

association. The final consequence of this associative thought is the ‘total work of art’ that emerges from an interaction of the arts.”³⁶

Theo van Doesburg’s guiding idea, which is clearly found in his writings, aimed chiefly at establishing consistent and systematic basic principles of art, and also took aim at a way for all art forms to strive for universal content with a universally applicable design. He was not much interested in an all-encompassing final product in the form of a total work of art that, in his opinion, opposes an analysis of the design medium. One could also try to express it more abstractly—or better, more universally: whereas advocates of a total work of art have, as their ideal, the goal of jointly realizing an all-embracing synthesis, for Theo van Doesburg, the common artistic basis is the starting point of modern art. Even though these two concepts might actually seem similar in some aspects, ultimately they can scarcely be equated with each other. The particularities of the Doesburgian theories are in danger of being lost in a historically imprecise model of the total work of art, just as generalized use of the concept harbors the risk of hypotheses like those defined by Laurence Sterne through his protagonist, Tristram Shandy: “It is in the nature of an hypothesis, when once a man has conceived it, that it assimilates every thing to itself as proper nourishment; and, from the first moment of your begetting it, it generally grows the stronger by every thing you see, hear, read, or understand. This is of great use.”³⁷

Notes

- 1 Evert van Straaten, *Theo van Doesburg: Painter and Architect* (The Hague: SDU Publ., 1988), 104. See also Matthias Noell, *Im Laboratorium der Moderne. Das Atelierwohnhaus von Theo van Doesburg in Meudon, Architektur zwischen Abstraktion und Rhetorik* (Zürich: Gta, 2011).
- 2 Matthias Mühling, “De Stijl and the Integration of the Arts,” in *Mondrian: De Stijl*, ed. Helmut Friedel / Matthias Mühling (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 78–94, 79.
- 3 See for example Ralf Beil, “‘For Me’ There is No Other ‘Work of Art’: The Expressionist Total Artwork—Utopia and Practice,” in *The Total Artwork in Expressionism: Art, Film, Literature, Theater, Dance, and Architecture 1905–1925*, ed. Ralf Beil / Claudia Dillmann (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 26–45.
- 4 For the concept and its application, see, inter alia, Jürgen Söring, “Gesamtkunstwerk,” in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Klaus Weimar, vol. 1. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 710–712.
- 5 Cf. the leaflet manifesto: Theo van Doesburg / Cornelis van Eesteren, “Vers une construction collective” (Manifeste V du groupe ‘De Stijl’), Paris 1923/1924: “unité créée de tous les arts, industrie, technique, etc.” or the manifesto: Theo van Doesburg / Cornelis van Eesteren, “-□+=R₄,” *De Stijl* 6, no. 6/7 (1923/1925) [dated 1923, published 1924]: 91f: “unité plastique de tous les arts, exclusivisme, technique, industrie.” Regarding the dating of the manifestos and texts around 1923/1924, see Bois / Reichlin. The assertion that the leaflet was first distributed at the second exhibition in 1924 is not presented there in an entirely conclusive manner.
- 6 I. K. Bonset (i.e., Theo van Doesburg), “Het andere Gezicht” [The Other Face], *De Stijl* 3 (1919/1920), no. 10, 84–86; no. 11, 90–92; 4 (1921), no. 4, 49–51, citation no. 10, 85: “Levensmathematica. ... Willen wij ... van uit het punt-ik (een toestand van geheel in zichzelf afgesloten individualisme) tot lijn-ik, van lijn-ik tot vlak-ik, van vlak-ik tot lichaam-ik, van lichaam-ik tot overlichamelijk-uitgebreid-ik, te ontwikkelen.” English translation from: Hubert F. van den Berg, *The Import of Nothing: How Dada Came, Saw and Vanished in the Low Countries (1915–1929)* (New York: G. K. Hall, 2003), 125.
- 7 Theo van Doesburg, “De architectuur als synthese der nieuwe beelding,” *De Stijl* 6, no. 6/7 (1924): 82. Also similar in: “Die neue Architektur und ihre Folgen,” *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst* 9 (1925), H. 12, 502–518.
- 8 Theo van Doesburg, “Neue Architektur,” 517.
- 9 Walter Gropius, *Manifest and Program of the Staatliches Bauhaus* (Weimar 1919), as translated by Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert in Hans M. Wingler, *The Bauhaus* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1973) 31–33, 32.
- 10 Henry van de Velde, “Allgemeine Bemerkungen zu einer Synthese der Kunst,” *Pan* 5, no. 4 (1899/1900): 261–270, 262.
- 11 Cf. Bruno Taut, *Die Stadtkrone: Mit Beiträgen von Paul Scheerbart, Erich Baron, Adolf Behne*, (Jena: Diederichs, 1919).
- 12 Victor Hugo, *Norre-Dame de Paris*, book VI chapt. 2, (Paris: Eugène Renduel, 1832), cited here from the translation by Isabel F. Hapgood (n. P.: CreateSpace, 2013), 148. In his article “Wiedergeburt der Baukunst” [Rebirth of Ar-

- chitecture), in Taur, *Stadtkrone*, 115–131, 120, Behne seems to directly object to Hugo's view of time as the creator and builder of cathedrals, without mentioning it, however.
- 13 Behne, "Wiedergeburt," 115.
 - 14 All quotations taken from: Joost Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), originally appearing as: Theo van Doesburg, "Der Wille zum Stil (Neugestaltung von Leben, Kunst und Technik)," [The Will to Style (Re-design of Life, Art and Technology)] *De Stijl* 5, no. 2 (1922): 23–32 and no. 3, 33–41, listed here in the order cited: no. 3, 33; no. 3, 40; no. 3, 39; no. 3, 40; no. 2, 24; no. 3, 40.
 - 15 Doesburg, "Neue Architektur", 511–512.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, 503.
 - 17 Doesburg / Eesteren, "Vers une construction collective," *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, trans. Kenneth Frampton (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980), 147.
 - 18 Piet Mondrian, "Muss [die] Malerei der Architektur gegenüber als minderwertig gelten?," in idem, *Neue Gestaltung*, (Munich: Langen, 1925), *Neue Bauhausbücher* 5, 65–66, 66: "The new aesthetic of architecture is the same as that of painting. ... Through the unity of the new aesthetic, architecture and painting can form one art and develop in tandem."
 - 19 [Theo van Doesburg], "Commentaires sur la base de la peinture concrète," *Art concret* 1 (1930), numéro d'introduction, 2–4, 3. English translation from: Jonneke Jobse, *De Stijl Continued: The Journal Structure (1925–1964): An Artists' Debate* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2005), 220. "La plupart des peintres travaillent à la manière des pâtisseries et des modistes. Au contraire, nous travaillons avec des données des mathématiques (euclidiennes ou non euclidiennes) et de la science, c'est-à-dire avec des moyens intellectuels."
 - 20 Carlund, Doesburg, Hélon, Tutundjian, Wantz, "Base de la peinture concrète," *Art concret* 1 (1930), numéro d'introduction, 1: "L'œuvre d'art doit être entièrement conçue et formée par l'esprit avant son exécution. Elle ne doit rien recevoir des données formelles de la nature, ni de la sensualité, ni de la sentimentalité. Nous voulons exclure le lyrisme, le dramatisme, le symbolisme, etc. ... Un élément pictural n'a pas d'autre signification que 'lui-même'." English translation as: "Basis of Concrete Painting," in: *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, ed. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln, NE: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2001), 520.
 - 21 Compare the reproduction of his drawings for *Aritihmetischen Komposition*: Theo van Doesburg, "Film als reine Gestaltung," *Die Form: Zeitschrift für gestaltende Arbeit* 4, no. 10 (1929): 241–249. English translation as: "Film as Pure Form," trans. Standish D. Lawder, *Form* 1 (Summer 1966), 5–11.
 - 22 Theo van Doesburg, "Tot een beeltdende architectuur" [Towards a Plastic Architecture], *De Stijl* 6, no. 6/7 (1924): 78–83, 82. Shortly thereafter appeared: "De nieuwe architectuur," *Bouwkundig weekblad* 45, no. 20 (1924): 200–204. Quoted here from the English translation by Hans L. C. Jaffé in: *De Stijl* (New York: Abrams, 1971).
 - 23 Letter from Theo van Doesburg to Anthony Kok, as cited in: Hans Ludwig C. Jaffé, *De Stijl 1917–1931: The Dutch Contribution to Modern Art* (Leiden: dbnl, 2008), 172.
 - 24 Theo van Doesburg, "10 jaren Stijl. Algemeene inleiding" [10 Years of De Stijl: General Introduction], *De Stijl* 7, no. 79/84 (1926/27): 2–9, 3: "De stijldece als opheffing aller stijlen in een elementaire beelding, is zinvol, spiritueel en op den tijd vooruit."
 - 25 Theo van Doesburg, "Schilderkunst en plastic: Elementarisme (Manifest-fragment)," *De Stijl* 7, no. 78 (1926/27): 82–87, 83: "Het Elementarisme schakelt de architectuur als kunst geheel uit. Uit jarenlange ervaring en onderzoek is gebleken, dat kunst en architectuur totaal andere onverenigbare factoren zijn. Het Elementarisme streeft bewust naar het einde der kunstnijverheid [...]." Quoted here from the English translation by Hans L. C. Jaffé in: *De Stijl* (1971).
 - 26 *L'Aubette ou la couleur dans l'architecture: Une œuvre de Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Theo van Doesburg*, ed. Emmanuel Guigon / Hans van der Werf / Mariet Willinge (Strasbourg: Musées de Strasbourg, 2006), 84. Cf. also *ibid.*, Otakar Macel, 164.
 - 27 Theo van Doesburg, "Notices sur l'Aubette à Strasbourg," *De Stijl* 8, no. 87/89 (1928): 1–18, 4.
 - 28 Theo van Doesburg, "Farben im Raum und Zeit," *De Stijl* 8, no. 87/89 (1928): 26–36, 34. Quoted here from the English translation by Hans L. C. Jaffé in: *De Stijl 1917–1931* (2008), 171.
 - 29 Doesburg, "Aubette", 6: "Les tables, les chaises, les canapés et autres ustensiles ont été fabriqués en série; dans ces meubles, comme dans les buffets, etc. on n'a recherché aucun effet artistique."
 - 30 Theo van Doesburg, "Neue Architektur", 503.
 - 31 Theo van Doesburg, "L'Elementarisme et son origine," *De Stijl* 8, no. 87/89 (1928): 24. Elementarism is "une méthode universelle, soit pour l'art, soit pour la production industrielle"; architecture "synthétise toutes les fonctions de la vie humaine" and implies an "absence de style."
 - 32 Letter of 7 November 1928 from Theo van Doesburg to Adolf Behne, translated from "Tendenzen der Zwanziger Jahre: Ein Konvolut verstreuter, schwer zugänglicher oder noch unveröffentlichter Briefe, Glossen, Kritiken zum Neuen Bauen," *Bauwelt* 68, no. 33 (1977): 1100. Van Doesburg used this passage from his letter virtually without change in "Vers la peinture blanche," *Art concret* 1 (1930), numéro d'introduction, 11.
 - 33 Theo van Doesburg, "Uit de dagboeknotities van Theo van Doesburg," *De Stijl* dernier numéro (1932), 19–24, 20 (May 1, 1928): "de architectuur moet neutraal zijn, beeldingslos."
 - 34 "Een stoel wordt een stoel, een tafel wordt een tafel, en huis wordt een huis, een gebruiksproduct zonder meer, een reclame een doodgewone reclame, evenals een braadpan geen kunst." Doesburg, "10 jaren Stijl," 9.
 - 35 Theo van Doesburg, "Zur elementaren Gestaltung," *G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung I* (1923), n. p. English translation from: *The Tradition of Constructivism*, ed. Stephan Bann (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974). See also the simulated facsimile: "G: Material for Elemental Form-Creation," in *G: An Avant-garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film, 1923–1926*, ed. Detlef Mertins / Michael William Jennings (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2010), 102. Compare also the texts of Bart van der Leek, including: "De plaats van het moderne schilderen in de architectuur," *De Stijl* 1, no. 1 (1917): 6–7, and: "Over schilderen en bouwen," *De Stijl* 1, no. 4, (1918): 37–38.
 - 36 Emil Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier: Ursprung und Entwicklung der autonomen Architektur*, Vienna / Leipzig: Passer, 1933), 14.
 - 37 Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, (York: Ann Ward, London: J. Dodsley / T. Becket & P. A. Dehondt, 1759–1767), vol. 2, chapt. XIX, quoted here from the 4th ed. (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1760), 175.