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TOPIC OF DISCUSSION II (1)

FORM IN DAILY LIFE

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The proposed title can be interpreted in a number of ways and I do not think I will be straying from the subject if I consider two of those interpretations which, to a certain degree, overlap.

(1) The value of plastic forms in the creation of manufactured objects for everyday use.

(2) The connection these objects have with the plastic arts (painting, sculpture). The influence of the forms developed in modern industry.

(1) The mechanical revolution that came about in the 19th century gave rise to a new relationship between esthetic and manufactured objects. Until that time, the artisan was in direct contact with his material and the creation of an object was the result of the eternal alliance of hand and mind. (It should be noted that any differentiation between the artist and the artisan was unthinkable.)

Nowadays, mass production, standardisation, etc., have reduced to nothing the contribution of the worker. Therefore, new and urgent problems arise on which the whole background to our lives - from our houses or motor-cars to the telephone or ball-point pen - is dependent.

What is the artist's role in machine civilization? Many of them creep into their shells by adopting an attitude of ignorance, of contempt or of refusal. It is true that scientific development has nothing to do with artistic creation - or only insofar as certain methods of execution are

concerned. But there is the problem related to the connection between art and techniques, of industrial design and of the role of the creative artist in inventing models which, as a result of being reproduced in increasingly large numbers, renew the background of our daily life.

(2) The useful forms evolving out of the needs of daily life may influence the plastic artist. In the same way, the painter or sculptor may exercise a more or less deliberate, more or less direct influence on useful forms. This mutual interference is now assuming particular importance because of the priority generally accorded to techniques in modern society.

The development of science and its applications, the discovery of new materials such as reinforced concrete, light alloys and plastics, have renewed the range of forms surrounding us; they have brought in their wake a change in our visual habits and completely overturned the traditional bases of aesthetic creation. Plato said that the only forms that were beautiful in themselves were inspired by the rectangle and the circle, while Cézanne was still able to say that his desire was to reduce all forms to the simplest volumes, viz. the cone and the sphere.

Modern forms, especially in architecture, derive their inspiration less from the elementary figures stemming from the circle or the right angle than they do from curves or complexes of wavy lines derived from the methods of calculating the strength of materials or aerodynamics. They are becoming closer to natural forms. Plastic transformation may be influenced - even if unconsciously - by visual memory, just as it may be influenced by the rhythm of a ~~xx~~ vibrant and speed-loving era. On the other hand, purely aesthetic movements such as cubism and abstraction have influenced the style of our great creators of useful forms, such as architects and decorators.