THE SUBLIME AND THE INEFFABLE OF BOULLÉE AND LE CORBUSIER

week 3 / Architectural Coupling + 1
term 1 / AAHTS 3
The Distribution of Country Houses, and the decoration of buildings, 1737/8 by Jacques-Francois Blondel
Two principles of Blondel

1. there must be a plastic character of the architectural body as a whole and of its single features

2. there must be a predominance of voids over walls
west portal to the Cathedral of Metz, 1768 by Jacques-François Blondel (removed in 1898)
Paris Hotel de Ville in perspective, 1739/40 by Jacques-François Blondel
San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, 1646 by Borromini
Baroque

imitation
conformation

Blondel

logical
reasoned
‘to force architecture to conform to organic shapes is to use them in a manner contrary to their nature...’
An example of the ideal Parish Church plan, 1766 by Jacques-Francois Blondel
Taste ‘... is a matter of the individual, and is indeterminate...’ (Blondel)
A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, 1757 by Edmund Burke (1729-97)
Critique of Judgement, 1790 by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)
Taste = the Beautiful

gives pleasure, therefore is:

subjective (individual)
not logical (unreasoned)
purely aesthetic
1. Disintegration of the Baroque by Blondel
   - plastic character of the architectural body as a whole
   - predominance of voids over the wall
   - a return to purity of form > imitation of nature

2. The sublime as the quality of logic, reason and the imagination
   - inspiring awe
   - evoking horror
   - constructing boundlessness
Essay on Architecture, 1753 by Marc Laugier (1713-69) describes the primitive hut
Project for a metropolitan cathedral in the days of darkness
1781/2 by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99)
Second project for a library (Deuxième projet pour la Bibliothèque du Roi), 1785 by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99)
Second project for a library (Deuxième projet pour la Bibliothèque du Rois), 1785 by Etienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99)
Second project for a library by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1785) vs School of Athens by Raphael (1511)
‘...It seemed to me that in presenting this august palace raised on the shadowy lair of crime, I would not only be able to enoble architecture but means of the oppositions that resulted, but further present in a metaphorical way the imposing picture of vice crushed beneath the feet of justice...’
Palace of Justice, 1790/2 by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99) confronts both absolute lightness and absolute darkness of the sublime
Finding myself in the countryside, I skirted a wood by the light of the moon. My effigy produced by its light excited my attention (assuredly this was not a novelty for me). By a particular disposition of the mind, the effect of this simulacrum seemed to me to be of an extreme sadness. The trees drawn on the ground by their shadows made the most profound impression on me. This picture grew in my imagination. I then saw everything that was the most somber in nature. What did I see? The mass of objects detached in black against a light of extreme pallor. Nature seemed to over itself, in mourning, to my sight. Struck by the sentiments I felt, I occupied myself, from this moment on, in making its particular application to architecture.
Temple of Death, 1795 by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99)
Temple of Death, 1795 by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99)
Cenotaph for Newton, 1784 by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99) plan view, half in section and elevation
Cenotaph for Newton, 1784 by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99) interior view during the day
Cenotaph for Newton, 1784 by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728-99)
interior view at night
Wonder of the Sea, 1917
by Werner Hablik
Crystal Castle in the Sea, 1914
by Werner Hablik
Alpine Architecture, 1918
by Bruno Taut
Alpine Architecture, 1918
by Bruno Taut
Glass Skyscraper, 1922
by Mies van der Rohe
sketches of the Acropolis, 1911 by Le Corbusier
view of the Acropolis from afar
sketches of the Acropolis, 1911 by Le Corbusier
view of the Acropolis from afar
sketches of the Acropolis, 1911 by Le Corbusier
view of the Parthenon on the hill
Towards a New Architecture, 1923 by Le Corbusier
cover and interior images
THREE REMINDERS TO ARCHITECTS

III

PLAN

THE ACROPOLIS

A view which shows the Parthenon, the Erechtheum, and the statue of Athena in front of the Propylea. It should not be forgotten that the site of the Acropolis is very up and down, with considerable variations in level which have been used to furnish imposing bases or plinths to the buildings. The whole thing being out of square, provides richly varied vistas of a subtle kind; the different masses of the buildings, being asymmetrical arranged, create an intense rhythm. The whole composition is massive, elastic, living, terribly sharp and keen and dominating.
sketches from the Acropolis, 1911 by Le Corbusier

first site of the Parthenon walking up the hill
sketches from the Acropolis, 1911 by Le Corbusier
the Parthenon from the hill
A City of Towers, 1920 by Le Corbusier
Contemporary City (for Three Million Inhabitants), 1923 by Le Corbusier
Plan Voisin, a plan for Paris, 1925 by Le Corbusier
drawing showing scale of the new city versus that of the old city
New World of Space, 1948 by Le Corbusier contains the essay “Ineffable Space”, originally published in 1933.

‘Ineffable Space’ outlined ‘the ineffable’

a synthesis of sculpture, painting and architecture
Untitled from the Ozon series, 1940
by Le Corbusier
Corbusier at Chandigarh, 1950s holding the plan for the city.
model of the Assembly Hall at Chandigarh, owned by MOMA, by Le Corbusier
plan of Ronchamp, 1954 by Le Corbusier
Ronchamp as seen from the hill, 1954 by Le Corbusier
Ronchamp from the interior
1954 by Le Corbusier