

The Khuner Haus by Adolf Loos - a critical study of beauty and desire

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Abstract

Pondering about beauty's relevance, meanings, and perhaps even the spell beauty can cast, we settle in comfortable chairs on the terrace of the Khuner Haus in the mountains close to Vienna. Heavy drifting clouds nearly touch the ground on the plateau around us this autumn afternoon. Our goal is to decipher the architect Adolf Loos' work, the Khuner Haus, and we put forth the question; do we in Loos' architecture and thinking find a *Beauty in spite of Nature* as opposed to a *Beauty within Nature*? And if this is the dispute, how has the existence of beauty been challenged? The point of departure for our exploration of critical issues about Beauty is the theories of Adolf Loos and Immanuel Kant. To classify Loos' two views on beauty, both driven by the desire to create more beautiful, we focus on Kant's work *The critique of judgment* in order to define beauty or the beautifulness. Can the Khuner Haus, designed at the top of Loos' career, show us that it is the universal beauty defined by nature that Loos has strived for all along? Do Loos leave the beauty to the mountains? Is there a beauty in the house also, that man must have the desire to explore? To follow Kant; a pleasure in beauty that is desire-free? We explore how the beauty aspect of a specific time, the "Fin de Siècle in Vienna", is being materialized in Loos' beauty aspects. And we ask; how can we explain the timelessness and frame of perception of this grandiose beauty within nature? Will beauty remain a mystery? If so, it's necessary to consult Kant about how the beautiful is that which, apart from concepts, is represented as the object of a universal delight. And further is this definition of the beautiful deducible?

Key Words: Fin de Siècle in Vienna, architect Adolf Loos, philosopher Immanuel Kant, beauty and nature, beauty and desire.

We are driving in the Alps, fast, fast and comfortable in the polished black Audi with horsepower enough to be sure to get the attention of the local police, and the stories we tell each other seem to have the same desire for speed and drama.

Stories that match the contrast of the nature of the mountains, the jagged beauty of the Alps we are driving through, to the piece of engineered technical auto we are driving. As explorers at the beginning of our voyage of discovery, we have prepared this journey to have the distinguished goal of performing a critical study of beauty by linking the history of a house and its architect, the experience and

judgement of beauty and the history of a specific cultural period. That is, to link the experience of the breathtaking beauty of the Alps, and at the same time heeding the admonitions of the Austrian architect and theorist Adolf Loos.

Being trained as architects and engineers the methods to formulate the discourse of architecture have our greatest concern. But is it all about beauty and desire, we ask each other, while the stories flourish in the cabin of the car.

Do not build in a picturesque manner. Leave that kind of effects to the walls, the mountains and the sun. A person who dresses picturesquely is not picturesque, but a clown. Country folk do not dress picturesquely, but they are picturesque... Do not think about the roof, but about rain and snow. That is how the country folk think and why in the mountains they give their roofs the shallowest pitch their technical experience tells them is possible.¹

One drawing the mountains in quick sketches and one listing linguistic annotations of the country we sojourn – not just a corpus of them but whole corpora - we drive on. Retaining the manifest of Adolf Loos on designing architecture in relation to the timeless landscape and rural constructions, we select a set of annotations that form an analysis about Loos' theoretical approach. Although it might seem as a contradiction how an architect that focused practically all his work within the urban environment, i.e. here setting the standards for the modern architecture, Loos also reflected and wrote about the vernacular and romantic character of architecture.

Adolf Loos was an architect who became more famous for his ideas than for his buildings. Loos, who as described by the Italian architect and architectural theorist Aldo Rossi, worked passionately in the field of architectural theory and believed that reason should determine the way we build.²

Be truthful, nature only sides with truth.³

The truth, truthfulness - is there a truth about universal beauty that we all can agree upon, conceive to understand and be affected by? Having examined the book *Adolf Loos – Landhaus Khuner am Kreuzberg* by the author Markus Kristian, it is evident that Loos' architecture cannot be understood as a functionless entity which merely gives us aesthetic pleasure. The Khuner Haus don't strive to conform to a hegemonic or paradigmatic concept of beauty but to a pluralistic understanding of beauty.⁴

Pondering about beauty's relevance, meanings, and perhaps even the spell beauty can cast, we finally settle in comfortable chairs on the terrace of the Khuner Haus in the mountains close to Vienna. Heavy drifting clouds nearly touch the ground on the plateau around us this autumn afternoon. Can we, we inquire, by

deciphering Adolf Loos' work; the Khuner Haus, and through Loos' architecture and thinking describe the beauty aspect led by Loos as the refined and sublime opposed to the imitating and surrogate or expressed in terms relating to the case of the Khuner Haus: a *beauty within nature* as opposed to a *beauty in spite of nature*.⁵

In the preface to the book *Adolf Loos; Theory and Works* by Benedetto Gravagnuolo, Aldo Rossi points out that the way Loos carries out his work is less certain; how Loos loves to write, to draw, to travel, to argue, to build. Loos claims that, like all thinkers and writers, at least since the Greeks, he is pursuing the truth, but it is, says Rossi, well-known that the search for truth does not necessarily follow a straight path, and above all, Rossi articulates; truth cannot be made into a profession.⁶

Was it this search for truth and the way Loos was working that lead to the fact that he is now considered one of the fathers of modern architecture? First of all his designs are marked by both asceticism and clean simplicity, but also a practicality, which would come to dominate many of the early twentieth-century architecture styles, notably the designs of the German Bauhaus School. But essentially Adolf Loos championed the use of simple geometric forms and pure materials. In his writings, Loos criticized the consumer culture, calling for a complete cultural and spatial rethinking, by transforming the way we live and interact with one another by altering our built environment. Loos did seek beauty in form itself rather than make it dependent on an ornament.⁷

We pursue this. There is no doubt that Adolf Loos ranks as one of the most important pioneers of the modern movement in architecture, ironically, his influence was based largely on a few interior designs and a body of controversial essays. In our opinion Adolf Loos's buildings were rigorous examples of austere beauty, ranging from planar compositions for storefronts and residences to conventional country cottages as the Khuner Haus.

Another story surfacing as we are drinking tea with honey and strong coffee on the terrace, is of the criticism Loos was so know for delivering in his essays. Not only did he, as in his manifest to the mountains, describe what the correct way of behaving was, but he also point his finger at those who did not follow this way of perceiving the modern world, a world that was changing rapidly in these years. Loos was convinced that he had identified right and wrong. And if he were asked here and now, he probably even would have had an opinion on our tea and coffee. But can we determine how these conceptions are related to nature and the truthfulness herein?

Let us dig deeper. Throughout his life Adolf Loos raised his eloquent voice against the squandering of fine materials, frivolous ornamentation and unnecessary embellishments, an aim that gave inspiration for modern architecture. Yet, few are acquainted with his amusing, incisive, critical and philosophical literary work

reflecting on applied design and also the essence of clothing in the fin de siècle Vienna.

In Loos' optic decoration was seen as a symbol of backwardness and degeneracy, as described in his most celebrated theoretical work *Ornament & Crime*, here Loos proclaimed '... a person of our times who gives way to the urge to daub the walls with erotic symbols is an animal or a degenerate'.⁸

Loos went even further and categorized decorative art, including trinkets, ornaments, handmade objects and the oriental, as trash and associated these objects with homosexuality, and agitated that the removal of ornamentation would rid society of degeneracy and crime.⁹

To fully comprehend we recall the setting in which Loos was formulating his ideas; the *Fin de Siècle*. A period of degeneration, but at the same time a period of hope for a new beginning, albeit the *spirit* of *Fin de Siècle* included boredom, cynicism, pessimism, and a widespread belief that civilization leads to decadence. The prominent generation in the period of *Fin de Siècle* supported emotionalism, irrationalism, subjectivism and least vitalism, while the mindset of the age saw civilization as being in a crisis that required new massive and total solutions. Often this schism created phenomena's such as engagement and distance, political radicalism, spleen and critical contemporary realism and at the same time *nervous* occultism, naturalism and decadence.

The *air* was loaded with sensitivity, melancholy and nervous refinement that went along with a new cult - *the dandy figure*, the dandy as a prototype was blasé, extravagant, obscure and egocentric with an imposed abhorrence of the everyday and mundane. The Dandy was fashionable dress, exquisite taste, and a penchant for *intelligent* turns. As Oscar Wilde, the Irish writer and poet who was the *proclaimed leader* of the Aesthetic movement, wrote in the preface to his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from 1891: '*All art is quite useless*'¹⁰; by this Wilde famously said that art does not imitate life, it is life that imitates art. A statement, a memorable *epigram* that expressed a feature of the decadence, which continued in the staging of the dandy as a tragic and nostalgic mode of being.

We accentuate that all the qualities that had been associated with the Aesthetic Movement, such as ornamental surfaces and dandy fashion, often were associated with homosexuality, which led to the removal of decoration from interior designs and fashion by many twentieth century artists and architects attempting to enforce heterosexual norms – the masculine architecture. We wonder if the *Dandyism* was an attempt to claim the absolute modernity of beauty?

The Medici Venus, the Pantheon, a painting by Botticelli, a song by Burns; yes, they are beautiful – but a pair of trousers?!¹¹

The Medici Venus, depicting Aphrodite the Greek goddess of love, *Pantheon*, the unique temple in the heart of Rome consecrated to all gods, and then *Robert Burns*, the Scottish poet and lyricist, regarded as a pioneer of the Romantic Movement and source of inspiration to the founders of both liberalism and socialism. What picture do Loos create comparing these famous artists with a pair of trousers? And how do these conflicting views challenge the existence of beauty?

Loos tells us that beauty is not a term that merely can be applied to everything, though of the highest quality. It is not worthy of it. Beauty is placed higher in the hierarchy of aesthetics than fashion, and this shows us how the existence of beauty is being challenged and defined into something out of the ordinary. Let's explore what it is that Loos finds beauty to be.

Being at the terrace of the Khuner Haus, as the sun pierces through the clouds and reflects on the mountains on the other side of the valley it materializes the universal beauty given by nature. As we are reminded again in his manifest about building in the mountains, Loos most certainly finds a beauty in nature, how else could he make such a subtle statement as the Khuner Haus. A sober, yet romantic detailed building compared to his outcry of style at Michaelerplatz, the store for Goldman & Salatsch tailors, featuring no ornaments at all.

Loos had a clash with the established styles at the time, the Aesthetic Movement, the Wiener Werkstatte, the Art Nouveau, and if we can term their view on beauty as *in spite of nature*, then we can term Loos' view on beauty as *within nature*. Or, when reasoning of Loos' view on nature, perhaps even more precisely; *within truth*.

Let us look more closely on this special house we have travelled to. It was built as a country home for the Viennese food manufacturer, Paul Khuner, and represents a late work of Loos, it seems to us as the Khuner Haus extends the search for the limits of thought into architecture. Situated on the slopes of the Semmering, the house speaks *the dialect of the place*. Loos says:

To bring materials from far away is more a question of money than of architecture. In mountains rich in timber, one builds in wood; on a stoney mountain, stones will be used.¹²

With this statement Adolf Loos substitutes the logical modesty of building and works with the deep roots in the site for the fetishism of the *grand form*, perhaps the ever narcissistic search for poetic consistency? Yes, says Gravagnuolo, in this perception Loos rationally explores the possibilities of artisan skill within the limits of an unbiased logic that is founded on the potential of the material.¹³

We find it illuminates the statement of how Loos finds beauty within truth. An example is how he lets materials be present in their original property, but also in the concept for the building being true to that of building in the mountains.

In the Khuner Haus a restrained - in this case somewhat traditional - facade hides a subtle interior design of different room heights; often referred to as: *Loos' Raumplan*. A contribution to architectural theory that accesses the idea that the interior of a building should be integrated into one space, i.e. the separate rooms and spaces in a house should be designed in a way that they flow into one another and functions as one interior.

How do Loos manage? Even in a simple house as this we are guests in, the interior is complex, with multiple rooms, staircases and layers, yet, we must state that he achieves a unity in his design. Above all the Khuner Haus is an application of Loos' principle of planning architecture – *from inside out* – inside; rooms of different heights are merged in a basically unitary space that returns to patterns of compositions. The large two-storey-high living room, onto which faces the gallery, gives access to the night-time zones on the second floor, all in all a planning that confirms the aspiration to spatial fluidity visible from the first moment.¹⁴

Ensuing the strong grafted design method of Loos; *the Raumplan*, we review how the rooms follow one another in a fascinating narrative sequence of spaces that are shaped to the requirements of the activities they harbour. Describing his concept, Adolf Loos stated: 'My architecture is not just conceived in plans, but in spaces (cubes). I do not design floor plans, facades, sections. I design spaces. For me, there is no ground floor, first floor etc. For me, there are only contiguous, continual spaces, rooms, anterooms, terraces and others. Storeys must merge and spaces need to relate to each other. Every space requires a different height: the dining room is surely higher than the pantry, thus the ceilings must be set to different levels. To join these spaces in such a way that the rise and fall are not only unobservable but also practical, in this I see what is for others the great secret, although it is for me a great matter of course'.¹⁵

An example is materialized in Mr. Khuner's study. Here a cosy feeling is emphasised by the low ceiling and the steps down into the room from the main hall; a sense that escalates arrived in the room and viewing the generous, bright landscape scenery from the oversized window.

If we follow the idea that Loos rationally explores the possibilities of artisan skill within the limits of an unbiased logic that is founded on the potential of the material, then how can we explore the view on beauty in the Khuner Haus?

According to Gravagnuolo this detachment is corroborated by the introduction of significant technical innovations into the rural building pattern, such as the opening of large windows onto the lower floor, the strong overhang of the roof and the use of sheet metal for the roofing itself. But can we investigate further?

When we arrived we were deluged by the greatness of the dark wooden Khuner Haus that stands so solid on the base of mountain stone, with the large pitched roof covered with laminated metal, this is above all a reflection of the technique of the

building, we agree. According to Gravagnuolo the Khuner Haus shows precisely that in architecture no *Typisierung*, no *a priori* model outside the context can exist.¹⁶

Having these technical innovations and rural building patterns in mind, our attention has been directed towards yet another view on beauty in architecture, through which we seek if we can make further appraisal or judgement about Loos's architecture?

In the article *Appraisal of Beauty in Architecture* Boussora Kenza endorse that there are three sets of interrelated components involved in creating Architecture. One being the physical environment, which encompasses not only the ground area and the three dimensional space of the building form, but also matters as the meteorological environment. Another component is the material environment that includes the materials available for the construction of the building, the technique of construction and the tools available. Finally it is within the third component, which Kenza refers to as *the abstract environment*, that Kenza ratifies it is in this phase the requirements of the buildings, in terms of activities and taste, are created. The latter involves social, economic and cultural factors. Kenza use these definitions of components as stakeholders for explaining *adaption*, which Kenza describe as the relationship between building form and these three interrelated components of the building environment.¹⁷

What we have learned through our analysis and study of The Khuner Haus is certainly that when broken into components, Loos excels in using and relating to the environment, he inlays a narrative of beauty and truth in combining new technology with the use of local materials and traditional craftsmanship. Finally the abstract environment of his creation is both a statement of style and a position in the architectural debate of the time.

We ask if these vernacular premises, or could we say the native language or native dialect of architecture can be rooted in both nature and beauty? And if yes, can the specific architecture of the house we are going to visit be opposed to the language of a wider communication in architecture, to a more standard language of architecture?

So far we can agree to Kenza's explanation of adaption, but is Loos' building really deducible through this last notion of *an abstract environment*?

What we shall see is that all of the notions described by Kenza gains in Loos' architecture, when perceived together as a unity, *a poetic aspect*. This we believe cannot be described in any way as exact. Please follow us:

Walking from the parking lot to the main hall, we have changed direction six times while walking: a conscious *Weginszenierung*. The hall, a typology of a room that Loos wanted to design for many years, is surrounded on two levels of rooms, the upstairs by a cantilevered surrounding gallery. Attached to the hall is a large

terrace, with the narrow side oriented toward the view, at the opposite end a sitting alcove with a fireplace made of local boulders.¹⁸

The veneered beams protruding from the contrasting white painted walls, gives us the sense of scale and logic embedded in the repetition. Letting our eyes wander the room details come forth; the cantilevering beams continue by the attachment of red painted balusters, halfway up a dark railing, and then culminating in a light wooden handrail. By protruding a few millimeters Loos display how each element is being carried, in this way - showing the beauty of the construction.¹⁹

He uses only clear or pure unbroken colors, colors that conform Loos' principals of dressing a room, i.e. enlivens the room and gives a stylistic distinctiveness to the building.²⁰

These subtle details are maintaining a harmony in the hall that let us conceive the main idea, the window in two storeys, as Sarnitz and Gossel explains it in their book *Architect, Cultural Critic, Dandy*: the scenery is understood as a *picture*: the window in the hall over two storeys acts as a frame for the view.²¹

If one adds to this the principles of economy and flexibility of arrangement deriving from the extreme simplicity of the wooden partitions, the liveliness of colour, i.e. the red painted balustrades, and the intimacy of the fireside area and of the elegant bedrooms with alcoves painted with frames in bright colours, one can well understand how this house represent a work of synthesis.²²

A synthesis in which we find a *Grundbegriffe*, understood as the basic concept of living over building, of *erlebnis* as a genuine generatrix of architecture. To decipher further we consult the German 18th century philosopher Immanuel Kant. The *Critique of Judgment* from 1790 is an important part of Kant's work on *critical* philosophy. It is a work on aesthetics where Kant argues that it is our faculty of judgment that enables us to have the experience of beauty. He presents what is possibly the most powerful aesthetic theory ever devised. But its contradictions and complexities - apparent or real - reflect and disclose to great depth the very complexities and paradoxes that infect our artistic and aesthetic lives. The work demonstrates Kant's openness to a surprising variety of aesthetic and related experience: alluded to or discussed are artistic genius, nature, wallpaper designs, birdsong, flowers, poetry, landscape gardening, colour versus design in art among others; the integrity of the environment and our moral responsibility toward it. Here, we mainly refer to the British professor in philosophy Douglas Burnham's work on Kant, which enables one to perform a brief bird's-eye-view on Kant's theories of aesthetics.

The *Critique of Judgment* begins with an account of beauty. Kant's initial issue is: what kind of judgment is it that results in our saying, for example; 'That is beautiful mountains'? Kant argues that such aesthetic judgments or *judgments of taste* must have four key distinguishing features. First, they are *disinterested*, meaning that we take pleasure in something because we judge it beautiful, rather than judging it beautiful because we find it pleasurable. We want to point out, that

by making his manifest, Loos judges the beauty of building in the mountains. In this way he constrained to design a typical house of the Alps without disturbing the beauty of the nature; to use the words of Gravagnuolo: ‘..a country house so vernacular, so anachronistically alpine, so rustic’.²³

Second and third, such judgements says Kant is both *universal* and *necessary*. This means roughly that it is an intrinsic part of the activity of such a judgment to expect others to agree with us. Indeed, for many purposes, *beauty* behaves as if it were a real property of an object, like its weight or chemical composition. Kant insists that universality and necessity is in fact a product of features of the human mind and calls these features common sense, and argues that there is no objective property of a thing that makes it beautiful. We find that universality and necessity is closely related to Loos’ thinking; he says:

White plaster is a skin. Stone is structure. Despite the similarities in their chemical compositions, there is a great difference in the way the two materials are used.. When plaster shows itself candidly as a covering for brick wall, it has little to be ashamed of in its humble origin as a Tyrolese with his leather trousers in the Hofburg.²⁴

A statement of Loos about beauty as universal and necessary as his allegory of the roof in his *Rules for Building in the Mountains*.

Fourth, through aesthetic judgments, beautiful objects appear to be *purposive without purpose*, meaning an object’s purpose is the concept according to which it was made, i.e. the concept of an object is purposive if it appears to have such a purpose. But it is part of the experience of beautiful objects, Kant argues, that they should affect us as if they had a purpose, although perhaps no particular purpose can be found.²⁵

‘The modern, intelligent person must present a mask to other people’²⁶ says Loos, understood that his dwelling is his mask.

The exterior of the Khuner Haus discretely masks the interior, like the nervous individual is securely walled in a dinner jacket – in that way the Khuner Haus is *purposive without purpose*.

Kant argues that beauty is equivalent neither to utility nor perfection, but is still purposive. Beauty in nature, then, will appear as purposive with respect to our faculty of judgment, but its beauty will have no ascertainable purpose – that is, it is not purposive with respect to determinate cognition. Indeed, this is why beauty is pleasurable, since, Kant argues, pleasure is defined as a feeling that arises on the achievement of a purpose, or at least the recognition of purposiveness.²⁷

Loos precept the exterior of the house in the same terms that he writes about fashion, by this we find that he establishes a radical difference between interior and

exterior, or we could say between senses and sight. The exterior is masculine, and behind the protecting façade is the scene of senses, of sexuality.²⁸

As pointed out by late professor in philosophy of art, Denis Laurence Dutton, Kant's rich collage of examples and arguments is combined with broad, systematic ambitions. Dutton allege how Kant measure a series of what might seem unrelated declarations and tries to tie them into a coherent philosophic structure, one which accords not only with aesthetic experience, but with the other great pillars of Kant's thought, the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Dutton highlights in the article *Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty* that Kant defines 5 claims. One; aesthetic perception – which is strictly demarcated from the good and the sensuously agreeable, and is a form of disinterested contemplation. Two, despite their inherent subjectivity, judgments of aesthetic taste demand universal assent. Three, the fundamental quality possessed by works of nature or art which makes them aesthetically appealing to us is their aesthetic form, *purposiveness without purpose*. Four, an underlying universal human nature makes possible interpersonal - indeed, intercultural - agreement on art works. And finally, five, art works are singular creations of individual genius, rather than products of teachable, rule-governed technique.²⁹

In Kenza's optic the judgement of Beauty or *Appraisal of Beauty in Architecture* relates to adaptation. As Kenza points out; it is the result of a harmonious relationship between building form and the building environment. But do we agree? And is this interpretation of Beauty a *pulchritudo vaga* - a free beauty - which in Kant's understanding is a pure (free) judgment of beauty based solely on the purposiveness of the form of an object?

A judgment that is pure – a pure judgment of taste - is based on the subject's aesthetic pleasure. Objects which are freely beautiful have no intrinsic meaning; they represent nothing. Is free beauty self-subsistent? On the contrary, the beautiful in critical art is often rendered by cognitive and ethical concerns.

What we know about an object and our beliefs and moral values always determine our opinion about what is beautiful and what is not beautiful. In this sense we could say that a critical architecture's beauty is a difficult beauty and not easy recognizable because we don't immediately see it but we arrive at it after a process of deliberation.

Let us go back to the ornament once more. During the Fin de Siècle period in Vienna ornaments often repeated animalistic, vegetative or geometric patterns applied to an image surface. It is commonly held that these ornaments served to heighten an aesthetic effect, to structure, accentuate or enliven surfaces, to frame, to fill –or to dignify. Sometimes, it does more than that but being too often associated with triviality, domesticity or *popular culture* and fails to convince that beauty can be clever too. It would, we find, be enough just to mention Loos's invectives:

No ornament can any longer be made today by anyone who lives on our cultural level. It is different with the individuals and peoples who have not yet reached this level...I can tolerate the ornament of the Kaffir, The Persian, the Slovak peasant woman, my shoemaker's ornaments, for they have no other way of attaining the high points of their existence. We have art, which has taken the place of ornament.³⁰

Even mere decoration, or we could argue - free beauty - in Kant's terms acquires a political function. Then, the beautiful, *inoffensive* ornament must have been started to be increasingly used by political artists from the art world or from the margins as a means of criticism of the disturbed conditions of the world.

According to Dutton Kant's intention were different, his analysis of beauty in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, says Dutton, gradually led to the view that beauty is insignificant, shallow and express nothing but a flimsy sense of pleasure.³¹

In general, Kant holds that pleasure is the prime motivation for human actions: 'for all [...] each seeing things his own way, would be after one goal, which for everyone is gratification'.³²

Kenza regards beauty as an emotion that presupposes an individual appraisal of a situation. With the article *Appraisal of Beauty in Architecture* Kenza has attempted to define beauty as a totality. This corresponds to a complex set of harmonious relationships between man, building form and environment. Do these alliances succeed, Kenza call it *adaptation*. Beauty is a consequence of this adaptation; it results from man's particular understanding of this set of complex relationships.

Beauty, we argue, is a source of pleasure because it is not detached from human needs and values. Even if the palace or the modest mountain hut itself, as a concrete object, or as a political-economical symbol does not correspond to our current needs, it's beauty still does. We may not need this particular palace or the Khuner Haus, or any other ones; we may reject this or that particular beauty image for many reasons, but we do need beauty. We have consented that Loos' architecture cannot be understood as a functionless entity which merely gives us aesthetic pleasure. But the Khuner Haus don't strive to conform to a hegemonic or paradigmatic concept of beauty, the building urge us against a pluralistic understanding of beauty.³³

It is our conclusion that the Khuner Haus show us that there in architecture can exist a *universal beauty*. Loos creates beauty in the interior, a beauty that one feels the desire to explore. To follow Kant; a pleasure in beauty that cannot be desire-free.

In our exploration of critical issues about *beauty* we find *Loos' Raumplan* central. Based on the considerations of a specific model for a spatial plan in the interior of the Khuner Haus we do not see the configurations of the plan in just two-dimensional floor levels, but as a purpose that establish three-dimensional spaces. Spaces we find define beauty and frame the purpose of beauty, i.e. host beauty as *purposive without purpose*. Not least do we in Loos' architecture and thinking find a *beauty in spite of nature* as opposed to a *beauty within nature*.

We have tried to understand the nature of existence and judgment of beauty and in our critical study on beauty and desire we found Loos' discourse about beauty, a discourse that did not fear the connection between the aesthetic and pleasure - or desire. Untangling the duality of beauty in Loos' thinking and architecture through the lens of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, we can conclude that Loos finds a beauty in keeping true to the object; *A beauty within truth*.

Notes

¹ Adolf Loos, *Rules for Building in the Mountains* (Vienna: 1913).

² Benedetto Gravagnuolo & Aldo Rossi, *Adolf Loos; Theory and Works* (Idea Books Architectural Series, 1982), 11.

³ Loos, *Rules for Building in the Mountains*.

⁴ Markus Kristan, *Adolf Loos Landhaus Khuner am Kreuzberg* (Vienna: Höhere Graphische Bundes-, Lehr-, und Versuchsanstalt, 2008)

⁵ Michael Edward Troy, trans., *Why a man should be well-dressed, Appearances can be revealing* (Vienna: Metroverlag, 2011), 95

⁶ Gravagnuolo and Rossi, *Adolf Loos; Theory and Works*, 11.

⁷ Troy, trans., *Why a man should be well-dressed, Appearances can be revealing*, 69.

⁸ Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime." In *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays*. Ed. Michael Mitchell (Riverside California: Ariadne Press, 1908), 167.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 176

¹⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, (Project Gutenberg, 2008), Viewed 15 January 2014, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/174/174-h/174-h.htm>.

¹¹ Troy, trans., *Why a man should be well-dressed, Appearances can be revealing*, 29.

¹² Heinrich Kulka, *Adolf Loos; Das Werk des Architekten* (Vienna: 1931), 18.

¹³ Gravagnuolo and Rossi, *Adolf Loos; Theory and Works*, 204.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ 'a stenograph of a conversation between K. Lhota and A. L., Plzeň, 1930', Viewed 21 June 2013, <http://www.mullerovavila.cz/?q=english/node/430>.

¹⁶ Gravagnuolo and Rossi, *Adolf Loos; Theory and Works*, 204.

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- ¹⁷ Boussora Kenza, *Appraisal of Beauty in Architecture* (Inter-Disciplinary.net, 2013), Viewed 10 January 2014, <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/critical-issues/ethos/beauty/project-archives/conference-programme-abstracts-and-papers/session-9-beautys-uses-experiencing-and-building-the-world/>.
- ¹⁸ August Sarnitz and Peter Gossel, *Adolf Loos, 1870-1933 Architect, Cultural Critic, Dandy* (2003), 80.
- ¹⁹ Kristan, *Adolf Loos Landhaus Khuner am Kreuzberg*, 24.
- ²⁰ Micheala Knapp, *Adolf Loos: "Aber suche den grund der form auf"* (Vienna: Die Presse. Schaufenster, 1991)
- ²¹ Sarnitz and Gossel, *Adolf Loos, 1870-1933 Architect, Cultural Critic, Dandy*, 80.
- ²² Gravagnuolo and Rossi, *Adolf Loos; Theory and Works*, 205.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 204
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 131
- ²⁵ Douglas Burnham, *Kant's Aesthetics*, Viewed 21 June 2013, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/kantaest/>.
- ²⁶ Charlotte and Arthur Loeb, *Theo van Doesburg: On European Architecture*, 1926, 131.
- ²⁷ James Creed Meredith, trans., *Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- ²⁸ Beatriz Colomina, *The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 93.
- ²⁹ Denis Laurence Dutton, *Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty* (The British Journal of Aesthetics Nr. 34 1994), 226-41.
- ³⁰ Valerie Jaudon and Joyce Kozloff. *Art Historical Notion of Progress and Culture* (1978), 38-42.
- ³¹ Dutton, *Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty*, 226-41.
- ³² James C. Meredith, trans., Meredith, James C., trans. *Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement, (Part One, The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement)* (Digireads.com Publishing, 2005), §3.
- ³³ Markus Kristan, *Adolf Loos Landhaus Khuner am Kreuzberg* (Vienna: Höhere Graphische Bundes-, Lehr-, und Versuchsanstalt, 2008)

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