openness and honesty (while rejecting its grand utopian vistas—Le Corbusier, after all, would have eradicated if he could the very notion of the street) but also the thrusting, dynamic imagery of Constructivism, and something of Futurism’s savage beauty as well. Above all, however, the New Spirit owes its existence to Dada.

THE GENESIS OF FREEDOM

Dada, widely misunderstood as a purely negative force or anti-art, was in fact hugely influential. In a few short years it was to re-evaluate the role of art and artists in society so profoundly that none of the arts—poetry, music, painting, sculpture, photography—would, or could, ever be the same again. It was, in the words of Werner Haftmann,\(^5\) a movement in which ‘all the values of human existence . . . were brought into play, and every object, every thought, turned on its head, mocked and mislaced, as an experiment, in order to see what there was behind it, beneath it, against it, mixed up in it . . . a state of mind feverishly exalted by the freedom-virus, a unique mixture of insatiable curiosity, playfulness, and pure contradiction’.

It may have been shortlived, but it was fecund, numbering amongst its offspring many of the most provocative art movements of the century: Surrealism, arte povera, Pop Art, Action Painting, Conceptual Sculpture, Performance Art, ‘60s Happenings’, the Situationists, and punk/New Wave itself. Unlike other early movements of this century (Futurism, Cubism, Neo-Plasticism) Dada was not a new style or technique but, in the words of Tristan Tzara, a ‘state of mind’. It could not, therefore, be copied so much as absorbed—and, consciously or unconsciously, and with varying degrees of success and superficiality, Dada’s ‘freedom-virus’ has been absorbed, direct into the bloodstream of twentieth-century art.

But in architecture—which, since Modernism, has distanced itself from the other arts—there has been no really comparable attempt to build anew. (The inflatables, geodesics and wood-butchery of the ‘60s went some way toward questioning the established order but have remained, despite themselves, fringe events.) Until now.

Now there is something new happening in architecture. Something which, no longer constrained either by the reductivist morality of the International Style or by the need to revile it, is able to review, re-evaluate and re-use the legacy of Modernism in its various manifestations. There is amongst these new designers a resurgent spirit of enquiry, a renewed interest in space and movement, in the use of real materials—steel, concrete, timber, stone, even plastic, appearing as itself—in a stripping-back towards the essentials of architecture and, most importantly of all, in the dynamism of asymmetry, the very genesis of freedom.

DADAIST ANCESTRY

But the New Spirit is by no means a straight Modernist revival, since these preoccupations are combined with a freer use of geometry than the International Style was ever capable of, and the absorption of a much broader range of influence than even Modernism could admit. There are, for example, traces not only of Constructivism, Futurism, Cubism and Dadaism, and of the later wood-butchery, Archigram, technism and neo-primitivism, but also (in parallel with the music, fashion and graphics industries) of rock and roll, punk, and post-punk New Wave. To all this new vitality only the death-marches of Post-Modern Classicism have contributed nothing, except perhaps in provoking at last the contrary determination that architecture should once again LIVE.

Dada’s contribution, on the other hand, cannot be overestimated. The New Spirit, like Dada, is fired in part by the need to break-down and break through existing patterns of deceit and smug self-interest. It is not only anti-stasis, anti-concealment, but also profoundly anti the increasing smoothness, glibness and facile predictability of the established (and by and large unexamined) canons of the prevailing architectural order.

And, like Dada, its chosen weapons in this battle to ‘see what lies beneath’ are the forces of randomness, accident and chance, giving rise to the apparent anarchy and fragmentation of much of the work shown in this issue. Chance, however, is by its very nature undesigned, you cannot design the accident to happen, so to use such ideas as design principles is clearly problematic (though it didn’t seem to worry the Dadaists). Furthermore, the very idea of chance or randomness in design seems to imply a kind of fatalistic acceptance which is patently contradicted by the sheer dynamism of the buildings that result.

But the paradox is only skin deep. For the apparent anarchy is not, in fact, a lack of order so much as a deliberate destruction of the old to make way for a different, subtler and even in some ways more stringent discipline. Chance and randomness are used only as tools, levers to roll away (or dynamite to explode) the tablets of stone, revealing the multitudinous possibilities hitherto concealed by their weight.

In the work of New York’s Moser and Goodwin, for example (p25), we see a renewed interest in the apparently accidental collision of forms— reminiscent of Tzara’s cut-up poetry —and in the use of real, ‘raw’ materials. Honold and Pöschl’s Bogen 13 (p52), under the arches in Innsbruck, and their Dragonwing, embrace the grimy godforsaken realities of contemporary urban existence, and celebrate the power of the ‘found’ environment. The flighty, volatile forms of Vienna’s Co-op Himmelblau (p17) are like latter-day, built versions of Schwitters’ Merzbau, and their very method of working, letting drawings ‘emerge’ from the unconscious, reminds one of the automatist techniques explored by Arp, Janco and Richter in Dadaist experiments early this century.

Neville Brody’s now highly influential avant-garde graphics (p28) play with ideas of what he calls the ‘randomness factor’ and the ‘found image’, inspired by the work of Rodchenko, El Lissitzky and other experimental typographers of the 1920s. And Hasegawa’s ‘severance’ (p57), her deliberate participation in the anarchic chaos of the Japanese city, Zaltotay’s embrace of accident, or what he calls ‘dissonances’ (p60).