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Bakalářská práce

Ing. Michaela Abrahámová

Modernism in American art and architecture

Declaration:

I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently, using only the sources listed in bibliography.

Prohlášení:

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V Olomouci dne 17.6.2023

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Ing. Michaela Abrahámová

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Abstract

This thesis deals with modernism in American art and architecture. The aim was to describe modernism defining characteristics in American art and architecture and to analyze selected works of well-known American modernist architects and artists. Modernism's key characteristics and their reflection in the works of different artists and architects were identified. Based on the literature, selected buildings and art pieces were analyzed, and comparison and determination of the common modernism characteristics were done. The results of analysis showed that all the analyzed buildings and art pieces have always several modernist characteristics in common. Based on the findings, it may be concluded that, despite the very different appearance at first glance, the selected buildings and art pieces share the basic characteristics and ideas of modernism.

Key words: modernism, architecture, art, American, buildings, art pieces, 20th century

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 20th century, the art and architecture of the United States experienced a transformative period known as Modernism. This movement, characterized by a departure from traditional artistic and architectural conventions, brought forth a wave of innovation, experimentation, and radical ideas that shaped the cultural landscape of America. The impact of Modernism on the visual arts and built environment cannot be overstated, making it a compelling subject for investigation and analysis.

One of the reasons why I chose this topic was the previous opportunity to visit United States and get to know and experience the culture on my own. The United States won me over immediately, especially by its diverse culture and architecture which differs in many aspects from the European one we are used to. Moreover, exploring this topic allows you to delve into a pivotal period in American history that shaped the cultural landscape and provides insights into the broader context in which modernist movements emerged and thrived. Overall, studying modernism in American art and architecture offers a captivating exploration of historical, artistic, and cultural themes, shedding light on a period of profound change and innovation that continues to shape our visual landscape.

The bachelor thesis aims to describe modernism defining characteristics in American art and architecture and to analyze selected works of well-known American modernist architects and artists. Identifying modernism's key characteristics and their reflection in the works of different artists and architects is one of the objectives. Analysis of selected modernist buildings and art pieces and the following comparison and determination of the common modernism characteristics is another objective of the thesis.

The thesis is divided into a theoretical and practical part. Theoretical part commences with an overview of the historical backdrop that set the stage for the rise of Modernism in America. It considers the economic, political, and social factors that fostered an environment conducive to artistic experimentation and innovation. Furthermore, the theoretical part focuses on development of Modernism in the fields of architecture and art including paintings, sculptures, and photography. The practical part deals with building and art pieces analysis. The main characteristics of the objects corresponded to Modernism are stated and assigned to appropriate period of the

modernist movement. Selected works are then compared, and their common characteristics of modernism are highlighted.

I hope to contribute to a deeper appreciation of the profound impact Modernism had on the visual arts and built environment of the United States. Modernist principles continue to influence art and architecture today. The experimentation, abstraction, and focus on functionality that characterized Modernism still resonate with contemporary artists and architects.

THEORETICAL PART

1 HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

1.1 First World War: Postwar situation in the United States

Compared to the Europeans, who had trouble paying back its loans and restore the economy, the Americans economy had accelerated at unprecedented rate. Thus, America had become a global power. Consumer society arose due to the obsession with material goods which was an indicator of success and prosperity. Goods were sold like never before, even though functionality and ease of use were not guaranteed. Many goods were sold only for fashion and social status increase. In the matter of social and political situation, Western society was divided into two parts. Firstly, those who profited from the pre-war situation and whose effort was to strive for a return to pre-war values. Secondly, those who tried to take advantage of post-war chaos, deny the previous system, and focus on new ideas that would bring new opportunities and benefit them (Gelernter, 1999). The period from 1919 to 1930 is distinguished by the rapid expansion of private business which is encouraged by the dominant Republican political party. The next decade, the period of Depression, was characterized by the development of a wide range of public welfare programs supported by the Democratic party, which, however, failed to bring people back to work (Roth, 2001). The pressure between these parties influenced the area of politics, social behavior, and architecture.

1.1.1 Architecture after WWI

Regarding architecture, there were three main groups. First, those who held pre-war values and were behind the revival of Academic Eclecticism. The other stream, the anti-historic Modernist movement, sought innovations and new ideas. The third, not so extreme, stream advocated modernization of the traditional style (Gelernter, 1999).

The scale of architecture was primarily tied to the human body up to the 20th century. However, the economic prosperity after the World War I in United States led to change of the scale into a new one related to machines and mechanical production. Technical conveniences like the hydraulic lift elevator, the steel frame, reinforced concrete, and the internal combustion engine enabled diversion from traditional and historical concept of seven-story height buildings. Skyscrapers fragmenting the skylines

gained control of the landscape mainly in Manhattan and Chicago where dozens of office towers radically alter the urban scale. (Ingersoll, 2013)

1.1.2 Art after WWI

Regarding art, European artists, who fled the war to New York, contributed to the development of arts and helped define what American art might be by expressing a modern consciousness. Nevertheless, people's attitude after the end of the war shifted in favour of conservatism. Many American artists travelled abroad in quest of more sophisticated art and a more liberal political environment, while the majority of European artists returned to their native countries (Hills, 2001). Also, Hughes (2014) mentions that art has not achieved nearly as much success as architecture between World Wars I and II. No American painting or sculpture was able to gain attention of general public, the type of cultural impact that skyscrapers did. Furthermore, it was unable to do so because the majority of Americans were not interested in art, particularly modern art, and the institutions that could have presented new works were either too conservative to do so or too new to have much influence among the general public. Hughes (2014) states: "*Big buildings were always before you; mere paintings were not.*"

1.2 The Great Depression

The 1920s economic growth in United States was built on unstable foundations. Production in industries exceeded demand. At the time, many Americans could no longer afford it and so businessmen could not sell their goods, despite easy loans and great advertising. The situation gradually became unsustainable, and the stock market collapsed in October 1929 which resulted in the Great Depression of the 1930s. By 1932, industrial production in the United States had decreased by half (Gelernter, 1999). Consequently, by 1933, 15 million people suddenly lost their jobs, were unable to pay their debts and experienced financial hardship (Roth, 2001). The situation was further aggravated by the fact that the American federal government, in contrast to other developed countries across the world, did not provide any social support (Gelernter, 1999). When Franklin Roosevelt became president in 1932, the situation began to change as the government assumed the position as employer of last resort and the nation collaborated on significant communal construction initiatives. In the same year, Roosevelt also launched a federally funded initiative for the planning and development

of satellite cities, which led to the development of the first suburbs (Roth, 2001). Gelernter (1999) also mentions that President Franklin Roosevelt enacted necessary reforms in his New Deal for America which allowed the government to manage and control every area of life in America. As a result, the prices in industry were fixed, industrial and agricultural production was regulated, and minimum wages were set. Moreover, the national system of unemployment insurance was enshrined in The Social Security Act of 1935. The situation appeared to be largely under control. However, political situation in Europe quickly escalated with the rise of Adolf Hitler and his policies of rearmament, territorial expansion, and the persecution of Jews. The world now stood at the beginning of World War II (Gelernter, 1999).

1.2.1 Architecture during The Great Depression

While working diligently to complete the Empire State Building in 1931, the workers did so with some trepidation since they knew that there would be no more construction jobs available once they finish. By 1933, only 93,000 new houses and flats were constructed. Fortunately, some Federal agencies were created by Roosevelt and his team of advisors to put people to work. Work Progress Administration (WPA) was one of those programs that financed the construction of public buildings across the United States. The WPA program built 6,000 schools, 2,500 hospitals, and 13,000 playgrounds while employing hundreds of architects. With no private funding and limited government resources, building materials were used more sparingly and details were kept to a minimum. Thus, Modernism's minimalist aesthetic was compelled by necessity. And as this aesthetic of modernism gained ground, the Second World War broke out and in 1941, after the Pearl Harbor attack, the construction of civilian buildings was stopped immediately and was restored again after the war. The masterworks of American Modernism had been in gestation for a long time, which may be why they appeared so fast when the economy resumed civilian production after the war. (Roth, 2001)

1.2.2 Art during The Great Depression

Hughes (2014) states that due to the shock from Armory show, American experimental painting lost a lot of its momentum. And the Depression served as a confirmation of this

by focusing American attention inward on their own problems, woes, and national character. Suddenly, cultural xenophobia became prevalent.

Turner (1996) mentions that Americans had faced conflicts between old and new or modern ideas and traditional values for a long time now. Many Americans faced their worst life crises when the Depression hit in 1929. The past was the only thing most people could rely on as the future was uncertain. American painters who suddenly found themselves at the interface of European modernism and American thought, also looked to the past for direction. The majority of people began to perceive modern European ideals as subversive, foreign propaganda. American art, according to many artists, needed to have its own identity. For most of them, the solution was to return to realism while drawing inspiration from well-known images of the American landscape and contemporary issues. A lot of the themes praised the worker and America's heritage. Nevertheless, without Roosevelt's the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A) program, which funded murals and sculptures in public buildings across the United States and provided job to many artists, a generation of American artists and the cultural history of this decade may have simply vanished. (Turner, 1996)

1.3 Second World War: Postwar situation in the United States

Over 25 million people in Europe were killed during the Second World War, not only cities and countryside but also the economics and industrial plants were devastated by the conflict. Although, American casualties exceeded one million, mainland stayed untouched, and farms and industries were able to produce goods both for itself and for the world without a competition from Europe. American economy was prospering, and people spent a lot of money on consumer goods. At the same time, Europeans find themselves under the influence of American traditional values and way of life which according to Americans won the war. Suddenly, the United States became the economic and political leader of the Western world. At the time, President Truman implemented Roosevelt's GI Bill of Rights where the government provided returning servicemen with inexpensive loans for a house, which resulted in expansion of the American suburbs. The standard of living of many Americans has significantly increased. Many of them focused on comfort and security and became family oriented. As a result, America's population increased by almost 52 million over the next twenty years. However, America's political dominance in the world did not last for long. The Soviet Union as a former ally now became a rival superpower. The political and military tension between

the two great powers resulted in enthusiasm for technology which also affected architectural and art developments. (Gelernter, 1999)

1.3.1 Architecture after WWII

In the years following World War II, The United States took the lead in architecture as many of Europeans modernists moved there before, during, and after the war. In the name of urban regeneration, the United States carried out extensive schemes to demolish city centers. The old structures were replaced by the prefabricated concrete panel building, and the glass and steel box that offered the minimalist aesthetics. Later, versions of this modernist strategy became symbols of postcolonial liberation all across the world. (Ingersoll, 2013)

1.3.2 Art after WWII

According to (Turner, 1996), the art during the war was largely influenced by the arrival of European artists fleeing the war. At the time, due to the public's low interest in American abstract art, museums would only display European abstract art. The change occurred as war ended and most European artists returned to Europe. Americans started to see that their work did not have to be limited by dealing only with past, notably the European past. Authentic American art that would alter the way people around the world viewed modern art could be created. (Turner, 1996)

Hills (2001) draws attention to the fact that the United States invested more than \$13 billion in Europe within the post-war Recovery Program to ensure that Europe was a reliable market for American products. The United States also entered the field of culture. United States Information Agency (USIA) was established to promote cultural exchanges and sent exhibitions abroad. American abstract art should have better expressed the freedom of democratic countries like the United States where artists could express themselves in art freely unlike to the Soviet communist system. Considering this, abstract painting and sculpture came to rule the international art scene in New York in the late 1940s and early 1950s. (Hills, 2001)

2 MODERNISM IN ARCHITECTURE

2.1 The beginnings of Modernism

Packard (1995) states that regarding the Modern movement's beginnings, there is no consensus. Several authors have dated it to the beginning and middle of the 19th century. But even before that, the first signs of the Modern movement had already appeared in a variety of factories built across Europe. The first hint of Modern movement in the United States were cast-iron buildings designed by James Bogardus and many others. Modern material and new techniques were used but the forms were still eclectic. Art Nouveau and Chicago School styles emerging at the end of the 19th century are considered the true beginning of the modern movement. Even though Art Nouveau architects had minimal impact on American architecture, Packard (1995) also considers this style as a forerunner of the Modern movement. On the contrary, the Chicago School architects are considered an important factor in the emergence of the Modern movement in America by the early 20th century. A new, entirely American, architectural style was developed without being inspired by the Modern movement in Europe. Even Frank Lloyd Wright, the well-known and great architect of his time, was affected by the Chicago school. (Packard, 1995)

A similar point of view is presented by Roth (2001), according to whom it was conventional belief that Modernism was imported into the United States from Europe. Even though many modern buildings were designed by American architects not influenced by European modernism. He mentions that a very successful exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, organized by architects who were inspired by European modernism, may have caused this misunderstanding. This exhibition included a book that contained sixty-eight buildings, out of a total of seventy-four, designed by European architects who were hereby highlighted. (Roth, 2001)

However, Gelernter (1999) has a slightly different opinion, stating that despite the dominance of Academic Eclectic, several different styles were established after 1890. However, these architectural styles like Art Nouveau, Chicago School, Prairie and Arts and Crafts are not considered the beginning of the Modern movement, but he calls them the Progressive styles. The reason was that although Progressive architects met European modernism in some respects, they had fundamental disagreements on the essential issues. Gelernter states that it was not until the period after the First World

War that American architects tried to step out of the Europe's shadow and develop own style. The period between the wars affected many American and European architects. Many architects experimented with ideas on the border between traditional style and Modernism. And that is until the time when the Wall Street Crash in 1929 evoked the Great Depression. At this time many American and European architects start experimenting with completely developed variations of the Modernist styles. (Gelernter, 1999)

2.2 The Modern movement

Gelernter (1999) describe the situation after the First World War as that whilst the desire for restoration of pre-war values and traditions led to revival of Academic Eclecticism, so Modern movement in Europe called for the exclusion of traditions in architecture. Also, Fazio (2014) mentions that it was believed that devastated European culture would have to be replaced and that architecture should play a role in this transformation. Gelernter (1999) considers Europe as the birthplace of the Modern movement. Many architects in the post-war Germany, with a vision of social and architectural revolution, returned to Expressionist movement. In 1919, the Bauhaus school for artists and architects was founded by Walter Gropius who brought his knowledge and ideas to the United States. In 1920s, the Swiss architect Le Corbusier integrated a part of Expressionist ideas into the classic expression of Modernism. According to him, the old culture in Europe should have been destroyed and replaced by a new one. Many of modernism architects identified with the political left which focused on working class instead of middle-class. It was believed that Modernism architecture would stand for class equality. Before 1930s, only several American architects were attracted by Modernism ideas. The first buildings in the Modern style in the United States were designed by Viennese architects Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra who both worked for Frank Lloyd Wright and later established their own business. The Rational Modernism style from Europe was now applied on buildings in America by these two architects (Gelernter, 1999).

Packard (1995) also states that in 1920s and 1930s, Academic Eclecticism persisted tenaciously. But at the same time, Modern movement arose and established itself solidly around the world, not just in the United States. As well as Gelernter (1999), Packard (1995) mentions architects who emigrated to the United States from Europe and had a substantial influence on American architecture. Albert Kahn, Eliel

Saarinen, Richard Joseph Neutra, Adolf Gropius, Ludwig van der Rohe and Frank Lloyd Wright are listed as the most important. The ideas of some of them became so widespread at that time that it was thought a new style, which is going to spread around the world, is created. The International style, how it was called, was later defamed by most of the architects who were supposed to develop it. (Packard, 1995)

Martinson (2009) calls the period from 1914 to 1940 the International Style. He claims that despite its reputation as a primarily European movement, many of its groundbreaking pieces were created in the United States. It is considered that earlier styles such as Prairie house by Wright, ancient forms by Richardson and Chicago school were a foundation of modern American architecture that preceded International Style buildings in Europe. Even iconic International style buildings designed by European immigrants Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra were designed before those in Europe by Le Corbusier or Mies van der Rohe. (Martinson, 2003)

2.3 The traditional modernized

The efforts of some architects in 1920s were to define a new style without abandoning both traditional Academic Eclecticism and anti-traditional Modernist movement. The purpose was to gain the best of both styles. (Gelernter, 1999)

2.3.1 Beaux-Arts Classicism

This style was distinguished by traditional architectural shapes and arrangements. Although ornamental window frames, hoods and elaborate entablatures were avoided. The aim was to emphasize how important massing and proportion were in relation to the stylistic detail. In America it gained popularity especially with monumental public buildings such as the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, the Chicago Tribune competition entry and the State Capitol in Lincoln which all combines the dramatic visual effects of bold geometry with traditional elements. Later in this period, other American architects were inspired by this style and its ideas when designing skyscrapers, including the Rockefeller Center in New York. (Gelernter, 1999)

2.3.2 Art Deco

Art Deco was an architectural phenomenon, later called Style Moderne, which can be classified among the traditional modernized style. Art Deco, originally developed in France, first gained its popularity through the Europe and later it also spread in United States (Fazio, 2014). Art Deco in America was distinctive from the European one due to the fact that American architects could get inspired by indigenous cultures such as Navajo or Sioux. In the 1920s and 1930s it embellished American cities and small towns (Breeze, 2003). The style was at its height of popularity until the Second World War. However, the style was not officially acknowledged until the mid-1960s (Fazio, 2014). Buildings devoid of traditional details appeared gloomy to some architects. Therefore, those architects chose Art Deco to depict the Jazz Age dynamism and sensuality. It is characterized by using opulent and glittery materials, visually dramatic shapes like zigzags, sunbursts, and dramatic angles (Gelernter, 1999). According to Fazio (2014), Art Deco was divided into three subdivisions: the Zig Zag Moderne, the PWA (Public Works Administration) Moderne and the Streamline Moderne. The Zig Zag Moderne appeared mainly on commercial buildings in 1920s and was marked by bold, colourful geometric designs (Fazio, 2014). Businesses especially appreciated the design because it represented progress and efficiency and at the same time a distinctive corporate image was created (Gelernter, 1999). Compared to that, the PWA Moderne of 1930s and later, characterized by undecorated and monumental appearance, was often subsidized by funds from the Public Works Administration and frequently seen on government buildings. And the dominants of the Streamline Moderne were avoidance of ornaments and dominance of horizontal lines and curvilinear components (Fazio, 2014). New York's Chrysler building that was designed for Walter Chrysler, the automobile manufacturer, is one of the most famous worldwide Art Deco buildings (Gelernter, 1999). Likewise, the famous Empire State building, designed in Art Deco style, was considered the tallest of that time (Fazio, 2014). Later, residential apartment buildings were remodeled in the Art Deco style that was associated with the urban elegance of France by wealthy residents (Gelernter, 1999). Equally movie theatres, dime stores, department stores, courthouses, and schools all featured Art Deco architecture. The form of Art Deco ornaments was mostly influenced by the traditional building styles and local history, flora and fauna (Breeze, 2003). Many Art Deco

buildings can be seen at Miami beach in Florida, where the style adapted to the subtropical climate and mixed with a local colour palette (Fazio, 2014).

2.4 The era of Modernism

Gelernter (1999) draws attention to the fact that because of all the technological advancements that occurred after the Second World War, modernism was regarded as the best architectural representation of the new era.

The reasons were as follows:

First, following the hardships and nightmares of the great Depression and the two world wars, modernism seemed to represent a bright new age of peace and prosperity.

Second, the Modernist emphasis on logical and effective building technology fits in well with the era's passion for advanced technology.

Thirdly, the Modernist view of design as rational problem-solving appealed to the generation that had also applied these techniques to deal with the logical challenges of the biggest war in history.

Fourth, the aesthetic characteristics of the Modernist style, especially for the government and private businesses, seemed to sum up their own self-images: logical, efficient, the confident owners of vast power and wealth, but not flashy or desirous of individual expression. (Gelernter, 1999)

A similar point of view is presented by Martinson (2009), according to whom American society, compared to its prewar values, change unrecognizable. After emerging triumphant from a war and the depths of the Great Depression, Americans were therefore more than ready for a daring, creative and making-the-world-better movement. Thus, in the early years following World War II. modernism in the United States attained a creative apogee.

Both authors Gelernter (1999) and Martinson (2009) agree that Modernism was perceived as the official style of America and had become conventional. Americans, who had followed European ideas for a long time, now defined their own style and culture.

Gelernter (1999) states that the preference for earlier historical styles was no longer in place. The rational steel and glass skyscrapers, inspired by Europeans Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, became popular at first. But later in 1950s,

experimentation with Expressionist version of Modernism was started by many Modernist architects. Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Eero Saarinen experimented with anti-rational and expressively plastic forms, however, without exclusion of Modernism rational ideas. By the early 1960s, the traditional style's boundary was being crossed by many architects who considered themselves shape makers or form-givers. By the mid-1960s, Modernism became dominant throughout the American landscape like no other style has accomplished so far. Its rapid expansion was primarily caused by the Modernist enthusiasm for demolishing the outdated in favour of the contemporary which was closely related to the post-war economic situation and materialistic lifestyle. (Gelernter, 1999)

Packard (1995) also mentions the period after the Second World War as the period of the greatest flourishing of Modernism as well as Roth (2001) and Gelernter (1999). Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and Le Corbusier are considered the movement's major masters (Packard, 1995).

Fazio (2014) says that Modernists knew how to use modern materials and technologies. And also states that the use of them can be observed in the work of Modernism movement architects Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

3 MODERNISM IN ART

3.1 The development of modernism

3.1.1 Paintings

According to Hughes (2014), New York has long been the centre of American modernism's visual arts scene. But when compared to Boston or Philadelphia in eighteenth century, New York was a talent-poor city. However, this altered after 1910. America became the most powerful country in the world between 1910 and 1930, and New York became its most powerful city and symbol of change, renewal, experimentation, and hope.

A similar point of view is presented by Hills (2001), according to whom the visual arts experienced unprecedented expansion during the twenty years at the beginning of twentieth century. Hills (2001) also states that New York, Boston, and Philadelphia were cities where most artists were concentrated. However, other cities like Washington DC, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati were home to many artists at the time.

According to Hills (2001), at the beginning of the twentieth century, writers and artists debated the concept of Americanism. Several ideas were discussed, some people wanted to invent new definitions for antitraditional, antiacademic and experimental art. Other wanted to interest both Americans and Europeans by considering the term "Americanism". Others combined the names "Americanism" and "modernism".

According to Venn (1998), The Armoury Show of 1913, an exhibition that propelled American art out of cultural isolationism and into a time of extraordinary expansion and experimentation, was associated with the beginning of modernism in America.

Hills (2001) states that A. W. Dow, a professor of art at Columbia University, was among the first to use the term "modernism". And that he most succinct characterization of early modernism can be found in his comments, which were published in *The American Magazine of Art*.

Modernism, to many other early proponents of experimental, contemporary art, was the liberation of the senses from the restraints of Victorian respectability and conformity and the celebration of feeling, emotion, and the senses.

Along with contemporary thinkers and theorists like Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, and Wassily Kandinsky, these modernists also drew inspiration from postimpressionist styles that emerged in Western Europe and other culture like Native Americans and Africans. (Hills, 2001)

Early in the 20th century, artists including Joseph Stella, Arthur Dove, Max Weber, and John Martin visited Europe and became interested in the new cubist and fauvist movements there. Back in New York, all of them came to the same conclusion: twenty century needed fresh forms and styles that would push those European trends even further. One of the American artists who painted expressive, semi-abstract representation of the city was Joseph Stella. His paintings captured the imposing forms of skyscrapers, and the brisk rhythms of traffic on the avenues and streets. Others, including Georgia O’Keeffe, drew their inspiration from natural forms and organic processes and converted them into emotionally expressive artwork. (Hills, 2001)

Turner (1996) mentions the influence by European art after 1913, particularly abstract and avant-garde art. Then a few American artists started experimenting and altering their working methods by integration of Cubism, Fauvism, or Futurism elements. A lot of American experiments in modernism were unsuccessful imitations. Perhaps the timing of Cubism’s introduction in America contributed to its failure. American artists had no tradition to which they could refer, so they were unable to comprehend Cubist ideas. As Turner (1996) states: “*American artists found themselves isolated in a cultural vacuum.*” However, American modernism experiments have not all been a failure. The American painters who adopted European styles and applied colour theory had the most success. Morgan Russel and Stanton Macdonald-Wright referred to themselves as Synchronists. The Precisionists, a different group of painters, including Charles Demuth, were successful in fusing American realism with European cubism. Their paintings were arranged to emphasise purity of line and composition, and they generated stylized and simplified representations of bridges, industries, and machinery. They succeeded in achieving a serene, solid grace in their work, which is lacking in other modernism American paintings. The artists who made no attempt to emulate the Europeans were among the best of the post-Armoury Show era. Their art's abstraction appeared to result from an emotional reaction to their subject matter. (Turner, 1996)

Turner (1996) also states that the situation changed after World War I when many American artists were persuaded that Europe was in decline and they returned to

realistic painting, including Georgia O’Keeffe, because they were taught to draw from the past. Except Arthur B. Davies and Stuart Davis, who persisted with abstract painting, other artists gave up. But Stuart Davis was the only artists to pass modernism ideas to the following generation of American abstract artists. Making art in America was no longer a collaborative endeavour but rather and experimental, individual effort. Modernism was inspired by a spirit of exploration and individual independence. Moreover, as the 1929 stock market crash loomed, a lack of stability in both art and American life became apparent (Turner, 1996). Subsequently, by the early 1930s American art had divided into three groups: abstract artists, Social Realists, and Regionalists. The abstractionists were the smallest group, primarily in New York. Nevertheless, almost no attention was paid to them (Hughes, 2014).

3.1.2 Sculptures

Turner (1996) mentions that compared to painting, the history of sculpture in America during the 20th century is far less bold. Wood carving and other types of carving have a long history in America. Moreover, there was no support from the National Academy of Design to develop modern abstract American sculptural tradition until 1940s. However, some individuals experimented with abstract sculpture up to that time. The first abstract sculpture to be created in America was by Polish émigré sculptor Elie Nadelman. However, Gaston Lachaise, another immigrant who helped shape contemporary American sculpture, was the first truly significant American sculptor. He created stone or metal sculptures of fertility symbols, intertwined lovers, and earth goddesses. Due to the eroticism of his works and the unorthodox subjects he covered, his art was not readily embraced in this era of suppressed sensibility in America. And it was decades after his passing that his work finally received the respect it deserved. (Turner, 1996)

According to (Hughes, 2014) Alexander Calder, a sculptor and partially expatriate who founded kinetic art and created the "mobile," was by far the most fascinating American abstract artist. Calder is described as genuinely inspired artist. However, people later became accustomed to his works as is sometimes the case with pioneers.

Turner (1996) considers Alexander Calder the person who, like Stuart Davis with painting after the Armoury Show, kept modernism alive in sculpture. And also mentions that Alex Calder became a pioneer of kinetic art as he started to create

“mobiles” out of painted, flat, cut-out tin forms and colored balls. By the 1950s and 1960s, several of his sculptures had reached massive proportions and were painted in Calder's trademark fire-engine red and black.

Turner (1996) also states that the majority of American sculptors experimented with iron and steel after World War II. Iron and steel were durable materials that were easy to bend and cut. These metal sculptures were abstract works of art that radiated aggressiveness and fantasy.

Both Turner (1996) and Hughes (2014) mention David Smith, the first American sculptor to work with welded metal. And unlike marble or bronze, iron had no past. Whereas Hughes (2014) called Smith as the most inventive sculptor in America so far and compared to Picasso and Julio Gonzalez, who created the first welded sculpture in modern art, he did a better job of exploring its potential than they did. Turner (1996) is more moderate and states that Smith considered himself to be a painter, but after using borrowed welding equipment to create his first abstract sculpture made of welded metal, he began to work almost exclusively with metal. Also states that Smith's reasons for creating his sculpture were somewhat similar to those of the Abstract Expressionist painters in that he did not want to rely on European style and techniques.

Hughes (2014) describe Smith's art as industrial and that it reflected the machine age, mobility, structure, eroticism, and brutality.

As Turner (1996) mentions that in twentieth century, modern American sculpture enjoyed popularity and took various forms.

3.1.3 Photography

Despite being invented in the 1830s, photography did not fully develop as an artistic medium until the 1920s. The expanding field of photography was a significant area of visual art that was influenced by modernism. Photographers experimented artistically in a variety of methods, both on a technical and creative level. (Hughes, 2014)

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Alfred Stieglitz played a significant role in elevating photography in America as a high art. *The Steerage*, which is regarded as his first modernist photography, is often considered due to its sharp focus and striking angles as one of the earliest examples of modernist photography. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, ©2000-2023a)

Similar point of view is presented by Bate (2016) as he states that between 1903 and 1917, the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz initiated the beginnings of modernist photography in the United States around his New York journal *Camera Work*.

Bate (2016) describes modernism, in any field, as a complex term. However, Modernism referring to photography, is connected to the notion of developing new aesthetic standards from the early 1900s through the late 1930s. In this era, being modern meant being associated with novel ideas and fresh perspectives. Stieglitz infused this new way of seeing with the notion that the feelings of the artist-photographer were infused into the image. Several other photographers came to identify as modernists thanks to a new, "modern" perspective on everyday life.

Hills (2001) mentions Lewis Hine, the photographer, who documented American labor during 1920s and 1930s. During the construction of the Empire State Building, Lewis Hine took some of his best pictures. The photograph of the young man captured a thousand feet above Manhattan's sidewalks, swinging on the hook of crane, became a symbol.

4 ART IN ARCHITECTURE

Packard (1995) states that architecture has always included art as a vital and significant component. The visual impact of building is enhanced by paintings, sculptures, and other artistic mediums since the beginning of cave wall decoration made by prehistoric people. Painting, drawing, sculpture, and architecture are often included in the definition of the fine arts, which also occasionally embraces poetry, music, dance, and drama. Art in architecture typically refers to the visual arts, primarily painting and sculpture but also frequently including such arts as furniture, furnishing, and industrial design.

With the advent of modern architecture in the late 19th century, several architects made conscious efforts to remove ornaments in effort to make their building appear more functional. The link between art and architecture was briefly restored in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the majority of modern movement architects stayed away from other types of architectural art and avoided anything that resembled ornamentation. (Packard, 1995)

In the 1930s, certain initiatives were made in the United States in order to restore art's proper position in architecture. Although, a few buildings were designed with placement of artworks. During that period, the Public Works of Art Project, a division of the Work Projects Administration, gave art in architecture a significant boost. Government agencies funded about 16,000 paintings and sculptures that were placed in public buildings. (Packard, 1995)

According to Packard (1995) architecture-related art can be divided into four main categories:

1. Independent art pieces installed in buildings (paintings on canvas, free-standing sculptures).
2. Ornamentation that is incorporated in buildings.
3. Murals and carving on the walls that are, to an extent, integral with buildings.
4. Architecture itself.

PRACTICAL PART

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first part of practical part of the thesis is based on the analysis of selected influential modernism buildings and art pieces by various architects and artists. The main characteristics of the buildings and art pieces are described, and features of modernism are determined, both based on the bibliography and online sources listed below.

The second part, the comparison of these buildings and art pieces, offers a determination of the common features of modernism of these analyzed works. The criteria of the comparison were features of modernism described in the theoretical part and in the first part of the practical part.

6 BUILDING ANALYSIS

6.1 Chrysler Building

The Chrysler Building in New York City, which was designed for the automobile manufacturer Walter Chrysler by William Van Allen, is the most recognizable Art Deco skyscraper (Gelernter, 1999). The 1,046-foot tall Chrysler Building, constructed between 1928 and 1930, temporarily held the title of world's highest building. It claimed this distinction in November 1929, when the building's 180-foot spire was added, and it retained the record until the Empire State Building's 1931 opening (Britannica, 2023).

The decorative scheme of the building's exterior and interior is largely geometric. The 1920s modernism is evident in the building's pierless corners and sleek design (Fig. 1). One of the most distinctive elements of the Manhattan skyline is its stainless-steel spire (Fig. 2), which has a sunburst pattern (Britannica, 2023). At the request of Walter Chrysler, eagle gargoyles, the renowned radiator-cap acroteria, and an adjacent frieze of stylized automobile wheels were incorporated in decorative elements on different parts of the building (Fig. 3) (Fazio, 2014). Businesses and organizations appreciated the architecture because it represented progress and contemporary efficiency, and in this age of marketing and advertising, the distinctive architectural pictures also helped build an equally distinctive corporate image. The building advertises its goods with friezes of car wheels and hubcaps as well as abstracted

gargoyles referencing the hallmark Chrysler car ornaments. And with its horizontal black-and-white stripes between floors and spiky triangular windows punctuating the semi-circular shapes that eventually erupt out of larger ones below, the polished metal cap and spire at the top represents energy and movement (Gelernter, 1999).

When designing the building, Allen had to follow Zone Resolution adopted by New York in 1916 that did not limit the overall height of buildings but restricted setbacks at regular intervals to allow an angle of daylight into the streets. Before the 1916 Zone Resolution, the majority of the office building in New York were monolithic prisms which blocked sunlight from the streets and cast nearby buildings and streets into complete darkness due to their enormous size. These zoning laws, stipulated that a building's area from the thirtieth level up should not exceed a quarter of the ground lot, significantly limited the probable outcome. (Langmead, 2009)

6.2 Empire State Building

The Empire State building by Richmond Shreve, William Lamb, and Arthur Harmon was the highest building at the time (Fazio, 2014). These architects also had to follow Zone Resolution adopted by New York in 1916 that restricted setbacks as already mentioned above.

The Empire State building with its 102 floors and a height of 1,472 feet has only five-floor base with a significant setback at the sixth floor. Then the setback on top of the base rises by around 25 floors where another setback starts the bulk of the tower, which is about 45 floors tall. The building then becomes even more thin as a result of two minor setbacks, one over the other, above this portion (Fig. 4). (Tauranac, 2016)

The architects, Shreve, Lamb, and Harmon received a classical Beaux Arts education. However, they used a fresh form and an original approach to architecture when creating the Empire State Building, which we now refer to as Art Deco. (Priol, 2016)

In order to give their design a more opulent image, Art Deco architects frequently combined traditional materials with contemporary and industrial materials. Aluminium and stainless steel were new materials at the time, although limestone and granite were renowned as the materials of classical architecture. The Empire State Building is covered in silver-gray Indiana limestone and granite, and continuous chrome-nickel steel mullions emphasize its verticality. (Langmead, 2009)

Art Deco elements:

The lobby displays the allure of Art Deco design. The massive mural that runs the length of the lobby's ceiling is one of the building's most eye-catching design features (Fig. 5). It shows a celestial sky in the traditional Art Deco style, embellished with 23-karat gold stars, sunburst and in homage to the mechanical era, lines of gears are assembled. It served as the building's entrance for many years before being painted over and covered with a lowered ceiling in the 1960s (An Art Deco Icon, ©2023). However, in 2006, the lobby was restored to its original appearance according to historical images. Three medallions, that are placed above the entrance door in the lobby, are another Art Deco features (Fig. 6). They honor the innovative technology like electricity, masonry, and heating that was employed to complete the building (Prial, 2016).

The vertical geometry is also an Art Deco element. The absence of cornices and other architectural details allowed the building's façades to flow seamlessly into one another. Our attention is drawn to the metal spire at the top of the tower by the Empire State's exterior's verticality. The vertical bands that separated the windows and ran from the sixth to the 85th floor were made of chrome-nickel steel and were topped with Art Deco fan like motifs which resemble both sunburst or anthemions (Fig. 7). To ensure that the building came to a logical conclusion, the walls at the setbacks were softly tapered, and the top five floors had their corners chamfered, cut away and softened. Windows installed above fifth floor were flush with the façade and spandrels compared to the windows below which were installed in the traditional way. Additionally, the spandrels themselves were prefabricated cast aluminum slabs embellished with facing pairs of styled lightning bolts arranged in a chevron-like pattern in a traditional Art Deco geometric shape. (Tauranac, 2016)

Although the stepped ziggurat base, the sheer planes of the limestone-clad shaft, the interlocked setbacks of the crown and the grandly overscaled Art Deco metal spire are not particularly novel on their own, they are so expertly incorporated into the vast mass of the building that it has a unique identity. (Roth, 2001)

6.3 Rockefeller Centre

The Rockefeller Centre, New York's most significant urban complex of the 20th century, designed by Raymond Hood and Fouilhoux along with other companies, was constructed between 1931 and 1939. It was built as a complex of buildings and with further expansions, it now consists of about twenty buildings. The building's use of

stainless steel and aluminum, parking spaces for automobiles and trucks, escalators, air conditioning and high-speed lifts are all symbols of the Machine Age. (McCormac, 2018)

It was designed as a group of coordinated structures with the same level of civic attention, that Eliel Saarinen had envisioned for Chicago, unlike other Manhattan skyscrapers projects (Fazio, 2014). In a city known for its stark differences in scale and design, Rockefeller Centre appeared uniform and reasonable sized. Each structure rose uniformly covered in tan-colored sandstone and adhered to a regular bay system based on the widths of vertical piers (Fig. 8) (Ingersoll, 2013).

Low slab office buildings were positioned from east to west from Fifth Avenue, framing the pedestrian approach and emphasizing the central RCA tower. Slab blocks turned north to south along Sixth Avenue served as the composition's background. There is a strong sense of connection among the structures since they are all fractured slabs with graduated moderate setbacks. A strong sense of unity is created by the harmony of the Art Deco embellishments and the regularly placed vertical limestone wall panels. The interrelationships between the several underground levels were also important. All areas of the complex are connected by a network of pedestrian passages that run beneath the pavement level. Another level of truck delivery tunnels is located below these underground pedestrian passages, eliminating the heavy traffic and associated congestion on the city's streets. The tops of the office blocks were originally intended to have elevated pedestrian level connecting their roof gardens, but this was never built. However, one embellishment that was executed was the restaurant terrace and subterranean ice-skating rink at the end of the pedestrian promenade at the base of the RCA Building. This innovation in the urban environment of America's release of potential commercial space for civic activity was more of a final expression of the Beaux-Arts emphasis on public spaces than it was a sign of things to come. (Roth, 2001)

Hood had completed his education at the Paris École des Beaux-Arts. It's noteworthy that he avoided creating a traditional triumphal arch. He created a contemporary garden promenade that was human scaled to match the structures on each side of it. Even at the time, the construction of these two six-story buildings on Fifth Avenue seemed extraordinarily uneconomical. Hood along with the other important figures behind Rockefeller Centre, however, desired to break up the massing of the enormous development, to make it less monolithic, more coherent, and more

aesthetically pleasing. While labor and building materials prices fell during the Great Depression, the decision to take advantage of the chance to spend lavishly on resources like extra structural steel, which was put to a variety of structures to support luxuriant roof gardens was taken. Hood used gardens on top of the larger setbacks and used lift banks as setbacks to let as much light as possible into the office spaces. (Kimmelman, 2020)

Numerous, both American and international artists created a substantial collection of public art, including sculpture created in the Art Deco style. The center's Radio City Music Hall is a piece of art itself. (Fazio, 2014)

Atlas (Fig. 9) is a heroic-sized sculpture by Lee Lawrie and Rene Paul Chambellan and one of the most iconic Art Deco structures at Rockefeller Centre. Another iconic Art Deco piece by Lee Lawrie, *Wisdom* (Fig. 10), is the carving towering over the entrance to the main building and is visible from Fifth Avenue. The sculpture *News* (Fig. 11) by Isamu Noguchi, that is located over the main entrance of 50 Rockefeller Plaza and features five journalists' intent on obtaining a scoop, is also one of the most significant Art Deco pieces in the Centre. According to reports, *Prometheus* (Fig. 12) is both the most well-known and most photographed monumental sculpture in all of New York City. This sculpture placed above Lower Plaza was created by American sculptor Paul Manship. (Rockefeller Centre: Art, ©2023)

These are just a few of the many works of Art Deco pieces that can be seen in Rockefeller Centre. There are, however, smaller, more discrete Art Deco pieces on every level. (Rockefeller Centre: Art, ©2023)

6.4 Guggenheim Museum

One of New York City's most significant architectural structures, the Guggenheim Museum is a globally renowned structure that is situated on the Fifth Avenue. The building was founded by Solomon R. Guggenheim and designed by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright was opened to the public in 1959. He made his philosophy of organic architecture visible through the intrinsic unity of its construction technique, appearance, and function. (Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1990)

As mentioned above, some architects experimented with Expressionist version of Modernism in 1950s. Frank Lloyd Wright was one of those architects who became experiment, however, keeping the main Modernism rational ideas. (Gelernter, 1999)

According to Guggenheim (1975) Wright offered a glimpse of what, at the time, was a revolutionary concept, released from the limitations of conventional presentation by the wonders of modern technology. The spiral design of the building, which is made of cast-in-place concrete, that is based on a massive, cantilevered ramp that extends over a quarter of a mile in length and arcs continuously from the ground to the heights of the dome, which are nearly 100 feet above (Fig. 13). This circular shape is also reproduced throughout the interior (Fig.14), in the auditorium below the main level, the skylight above it, in the lift shaft and in other decorative elements like windows, circles of the terrazzo floor and the outside pavement and even flower beds. (Guggenheim, 1975)

Martinson (2009) states that Guggenheim Museum has been interpreted in one of two ways. Firstly, it was Wright's retaliation against the hated city. Secondly, The Guggenheim served as a contrast for the city, which Wright believed deserved to be revitalised. In any case, the Guggenheim is a magnificent example of urban sculpture, even though a continuous, circular display area is not the best place to exhibit works of art.

6.5 Seagram Building

According to Perez (2010), The Seagram Building designed by Mies van der Rohe, and finished in 1958, embodies elegance and modernist concepts. It was Mies's first effort at constructing a tall office building with the 38-floor New York's Seagram Building.

Martinson (2009) states that with its straightforward perfection in proportion, detailing, and material, Seagram Building is the architectural pinnacle of high-art, postwar Modernism.

Both Perez (2009) and Roth (2001) agree that Mies's solution became the benchmark for the contemporary skyscraper. Moreover, that corporate clients preferred frigid hauteur, that Seagram is perfect example of, and the glass box quickly became associated with American business.

To be granted absolute geometric purity within the parameters of New York's zoning laws, Mies relocated the tower 100 feet from Park Avenue, resulting in a large open plaza with twin fountains (Fig. 15). A compliance with local laws was achieved in this manner with just one setback. Despite being raised on columns and having a glass-enclosed lobby (Fig. 16), the building also needed more rooms, so a sizable service block was added to the back. Because of this, the upper levels have a layout that

resembles a stubby T, but from the front, there is only little indication of this, and it appears to be a simple rectangular shaft. (Roth, 2001).

The detailing of the exterior surface was carefully determined by the desired exterior expression Mies wanted to achieve. The glass wall is suspended in front of the supporting columns to give the facade its seeming metal bronze coating. The building is a dense, opaque brown mass by day due to the elegantly uniform fenestration of dark amber glass set in mullions of oiled bronze extrusions (Fig.17). Of course, contact to air would generally cause the bronze's dark brown initial colour to change into copper sulphate, giving the material the characteristic green patina found on copper gutters and bronze statues. However, in the Seagram Building, this natural process is permanently disrupted (Roth, 2001). Building's vertical articulation was improved by adding more vertical elements to the window panels (Perez, 2010).

7 ART PIECES ANALYSIS

7.1 Light Coming on the Plains No. I, II, III

Light Coming on the Plains No. I, II, and III is a series of the three water colour paintings by Georgia O'Keeffe from 1917 (Fig. 18) (Zilczer, 1999).

Hughes (2014) states that O'Keeffe eventually developed into a symbol and then an icon of Southwest modernism. Her inspiration stems from studying under Arthur Dow, an innovative teacher and follower of Japanese art as well as Pont-Aven painting, which emphasises the flat, abstract arrangement of colour and defining line. This was novel at the time and became the cornerstone of her style.

According to Zilczer (1999), the interpretation of sunrise in *Light Coming on the Plains* series was both subtle and inventive. It was characterized as a mixture of naturalism and pure abstraction. However, the degree of abstraction achieved by such restrained imagery is rarely matched in early 20th-century American landscape painting.

Hughes (2014) mentions that solemn arch of green-blue sky, separated from the earth by the thinnest of unpainted horizon lines, evokes the sense of American sublime. And it expresses the excitement one gets as they wait for the sun to rise and suggests an infinite, womblike area.

Zilczer (1999) mentions that the composition's vertical format highlights the limitless sky above the earth. And instead of directly capturing the image of a blazing sun disc, she opted to capture the fading effects of light. And with the three interrelated paintings, O'Keeffe evoked the dimension of time. O'Keeffe saw a present that developed from the past and suggested future development.

According to Hughes (2014), it is almost impossible to tell what other images she drew inspiration from, and it appears to be rather style-less in terms of aesthetic. However, this sense of stylistic transparency was one of the features of her work. Furthermore, it became clear that O'Keeffe's works were not only "intrinsically" American but also unmistakably the result of a female sensibility.

Zilczer (1999) states that O'Keeffe drew inspiration from the Dow's method of Notan-composition requiring balance of tonal values, when creating *Light Coming on the Plains* series. At the same time, Zilczer (1999) also states that there is more than creative adaptation of Dow's principles in the work. Her preoccupation with the meaning of abstract and knowledge about contemporary aesthetic theory were also important in transformation of the natural landscape into abstract image. O'Keeffe's beautifully depicted evocations of dawn later became symbols of the daring abstract movement that would dominate American art in the following century.

7.2 Swing Landscape

Swing Landscape (Fig. 19), a mural created for the Federal Art Project (FAP) of the W.P.A., is one of the most striking Davis's murals. Davis visited Paris for the first time ever in 1928 to draw inspiration by the Cubists. But the trip reassured him that American subject matters. (Hughes, 2014).

According to McComas (2018), *Swing Landscape* stands out for its exuberant composition inspired by Cubism and colourful, high-keyed colour scheme. McComas (2018) also states that although the work of FAP-employed artists is rarely connected with abstraction, the mural division both embraced and promoted abstract experimentation.

Swing Landscape appears at first to be a riotous tangle of hues and shapes, but the composition is thoroughly arranged. The best illustration of Davis's theory of colour-space, according to which colour both creates and transforms space, may be found in this work. Even though Davis gave a lot of consideration to colour, form, and line, *Swing Landscape* is not purely abstract. It represents the waterfront in Gloucester,

Massachusetts, a fishing community whose docks were one of Davis's most significant themes in the 1930s. Entire passages with motifs like rigging, buoys, ropes, and oil derricks can be identified upon closer inspection. (McComas, 2018)

According to Grad (1991), the use of recurring harbour abstract forms is formal allusion to the big-band jazz polyrhythms. Additionally, the change of the conceptual environment by leading the spectator away from the harbour's constituent elements—although these are still discernible—and connection of the landscape with sound were made.

McComas (2018) also mentions the connection with sound as swing music, a style of big band jazz that was popular from the middle of the 1930s through the middle of the 1940s, is referenced in both the title and the composition of *Swing Landscape*, which further stimulates the sense of hearing.

McComas (2018) further mentions that fragmented compositions, a lack of negative space, and kaleidoscopic hues are all characteristics of the *Swing Landscape*, and all allude to the visual overstimulation of modern life.

7.3 I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold

Hughes (2014) mentions that Charles Demuth was one of the leading painters of Precisionists and his work *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* (Fig. 20) from 1928, is the work that every American, who is interested in art, recognize. Hughes (2014) also states that the work, based on his friend William Carlos Williams' Imagist poetry *The Great Figure*, is a foreshadowing of Pop art.

Aiken (1987) states that this piece of art is a part of a series of "poster portraits" of notable authors and artists like Arthur Dove and Gertrude Stein by Charles Demuth. All these portraits are symbolic, evoking the identities of the subjects through the use of words and pictures of items. Demuth contributed to and advanced a modernist symbolic portraiture tradition.

In this kind of portraiture, physiognomy has very little to no influence. Instead, design, colour, line, image, and phrase combine to produce a complex portrait that must be read and analyzed correctly to identify the subject and determine which personality qualities the artist has chosen to emphasize. A great portrait should convey to the viewer whatever the artist perceives to be the subject's essential quality; a mere likeness just conveys what is immediately obvious. (Aiken, 1987)

Hughes (2014) mentions that *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* is rightfully regarded as one of the most iconic works of American modernism, but it was created by Demuth almost at the end of his life, and his identity has always appeared a little ambiguous in comparison to the more well-known names of his contemporaries, such as Georgia O'Keeffe.

7.4 Battle of Lights, Coney Island

Thirty-three years since filament bulb invention, electric light had developed into one of the wonders of American cities. And many people were still fascinated by it, including artist Joseph Stella, the author of *Battle of Lights, Coney Island* (Fig. 21). The large amusement park at Coney Island, however, was where it was deployed to its most chaotic, crowded, and delirious effect. The crowds swarming over its walkways were captivated by its strings and wheels of light, which had an abstract ebullience and looked like continuously exploding fireworks. Its electric colossus, the "Tower of Lights," was visible at night from a distance of thirty miles. (Hughes, 2014)

Hughes (2014) also describes Stella's association of Coney Island amusement park with the festival in his hometown in Calabria which he attended as a child.

According to Glaubinger (1983) the *Battle of Lights, Coney Island*, is Stella's first significant modernist painting. It is a sizable, intricate, abstract piece that recalls the brilliant lights and frantic bustle of the amusement park. It is similar to the Futurist artwork he had seen in Paris in both subject and style.

Turner (1996) describe *Battle of Lights, Coney Island* as the wild picture of America's most well-known theme park where the abstract shapes' colour and motion create a swirl of movement similar to how things appear from the perspective of swiftly moving roller coaster. Turner (1996) as well as Glaubinger (1983) mentions Stella's inspiration by Cubist and perhaps Futurist ideas. According to Hughes (2014) Stella out-Futurized Futurism.

7.5 “Mobiles“

Hughes (2014) says that Alexander Calder transformed sculpture by dangling flat metal pieces moving in response to currents of air. These pieces were nicknamed "mobiles" by Marcel Duchamp. They constantly redefine the space around them as they move, rather than being a solid entity with mass and weight. These “mobiles” were made of wire, wood and tin (Fig. 22). Some shapes made stately, deliberate arcs as they moved, evoking planetary motion. Others quivered with a delectable seriousness, squirmed, and danced, or shivered like aspen leaves. These “mobiles” could not be programmed, and their movement was random because they were not powered by motors. Thus, Calder was the first artist to include movement and chance into an artwork. (Hughes, 2014)

According to Hunter (1973) Calder was in a position similar to that of Stuart Davis as one of the few American sculptors who work in the experimental style throughout the depressing decade of the 1930s. According to Calder, the fundamental idea behind his designs was the idea of detached bodies floating in space of various sizes and densities, some at rest while others move in unusual ways. (Hunter, 1973)

Hunter (1973) also says that Calder added a new lyrical and creative expression to modern machine culture by using nearly uniform shapes, if not sizes, made of sheet steel.

According to Barry (2006) Calder aimed to create movement that resembles dancing and dialogical interaction. Moreover, to achieve asymmetry, spontaneity, light, lively, and multidirectional transitions.

7.6 Cubi XIX

Hunter (1973) states that first to the scene with welded sculpture was sculptor David Smith. With his devotion to industrial materials, like painted T-beams or welded and polished stainless steel boxy forms, the spectacular "*Cubi*" series, which, as their name implies, is related to sculptural Cubism, were created between 1960 and 1965. Another characteristic of his works was a simplified but unclear geometric arrangement.

Hughes (2014) agree that in the 1950s and 1960s, David Smith's artwork grew to colossal proportions. And states that the sculpture *Cubi XIX* (Fig. 23) from 1964, made of stainless steel, was almost three meters tall.

According to Hunter (1973) Smith's "*Cubi*" series with their gigantic scale, economy, expressive strength, and scintillation of light on their wire-brushed and

burnished surfaces, in comparison with sophisticated chamber music of historical Cubism, provoke very different reactions. Hunter (1973) also mentions that these works with their gleaming cubic masses made of stainless steel were classical in their order and clarity but utterly impersonal.

7.7 The Sky Boy

As the construction of the Empire State Building started in March 1930, Lewis Hine was hired to document the process. A year after, Hine published book *Men at Work*. (McMullen,2006)

Griffey (2015) mentions Lewis Hine's shot *Icarus* (Fig. 24), which captured a brave construction worker perched atop the unfinished Empire State building and states that the photograph captured both urban and industrial development of the time.

According to Hughes (2014) this particular one became the most popular of all that Hine captured.

Hine called the photograph in the book *Men at Work* as "*The Sky Boy*" (Hine, 1977), whereas it is called "*Icarus*" by Hughes (2014), Griffey (2015) or The Metropolitan Museum of Art (©2000-2023b), referencing to a figure from Greek mythology and compare it with the young man swinging like some Icarus of skill and risk on the hook of crane a thousand feet above Manhattan.

8 COMPARISON RESULTS

In architecture, modernism aimed to create buildings that responded to the social, technological, and cultural changes of the time. While each architect had their unique approach and style, the common thread among analyzed buildings is their functionality and efficiency, with architects embracing new construction materials, such as steel, glass, and reinforced concrete, to create sleek and minimalist designs. Modernist architecture emphasized clean lines, geometric shapes, and the integration of form and function. All these structures represent significant milestones in American modernism, shaping the architectural landscape and inspiring generations to come.

The selected buildings, The Empire State Building, Chrysler Building, Rockefeller Center, Guggenheim Museum, and Seagram Building are iconic architectural landmarks of the 20th century, representing the modernist movement in different ways. The Empire State Building, the Chrysler building, and the Rockefeller Center are a quintessential example of Art Deco architecture, which emerged as a prominent style within the modernist movement. Its characteristics include streamlined forms, geometric patterns, and decorative elements. The buildings' setbacks and vertical emphasis reflect the modernist principles of functionalism and efficiency. Whereas Guggenheim Museum showcases the modernist characteristic of innovation and breaking away from conventional norms. Its unconventional form and use of concrete reflect modernist principles of experimentation and organic design. And the Seagram Building is a prime example of the International Style within modernist architecture. It embodies the modernist principles of simplicity, functionalism, and the expression of structural honesty. The building features a steel frame, glass curtain walls, and minimal ornamentation. Its clean lines and open floor plans reflect the modernist ideals of efficiency and transparency.

In art, modernism rejected traditional forms and techniques, seeking to break away from the constraints of the past. Artists aimed to create something new and original, often experimenting with abstract forms, non-representational imagery, and innovative materials. Modernist artists believed that art should reflect the modern experience, capturing the dynamism, complexity, and fragmentation of contemporary life.

The selected paintings *Light Coming on the Plains I, II, III.*, *Swing Landscape*, *I saw the Figure 5 in Gold*, and *Battle of Lights, Coney Island* all share common modernist characteristics such as abstraction, fragmentation, dynamic composition, and an embrace of the technological advancements and urban modernity of their time. They challenge traditional artistic norms and experiment with form, color, and subject matter to convey the essence of the modern world and the changing nature of society.

The selected sculptures “*Cubi*” series and “*Mobiles*” share several common modernist characteristics, including abstraction, exploration of form and space, and an emphasis on simplicity and minimalism. Both artists challenged traditional artistic norms by embracing new materials, techniques, and subject matter.

The Sky Boy photograph captures the spirit of modernism in both its subject matter and artistic approach. The photograph encapsulates the celebration of industrialization, the exploration of the human experience in the modern world, an emphasis on technology and progress, formal experimentation, and social commentary. It stands as a powerful and thought-provoking representation of the era and its artistic movement.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to describe modernism defining characteristics in American art and architecture and to analyze selected works of well-known American modernist architects and artists. Identifying modernism's key characteristics and their reflection in the works of different artists and architects was one of the objectives. Analysis of selected modernist buildings and art pieces and the following comparison and determination of the common modernism characteristics was another objective of the thesis.

Through the works of prominent figures such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Demuth, Alexander Calder, David Smith, and Lewis Hine modernism found its expression in various mediums, ranging from paintings, sculptures, and photographs to architectural designs and urban planning.

Even if each of selected works is original and each author had their own distinct style, it can be claimed that all the analyzed buildings and pieces of art always have several modernist characteristics in common, even though they may initially appear to be very different.

There are just a few of the buildings and art pieces that were analyzed. Modernism was a highly diverse movement, and its influence can be seen in various artistic and architectural styles across the globe, reflecting the changing world and the desire to break free from the past.

Overall, modernism in American art and architecture sought to reflect the spirit of the modern era, embracing innovation, progress, and a departure from traditional forms and styles. It had a profound influence on the development of artistic and architectural practices and continues to shape the cultural landscape to this day.

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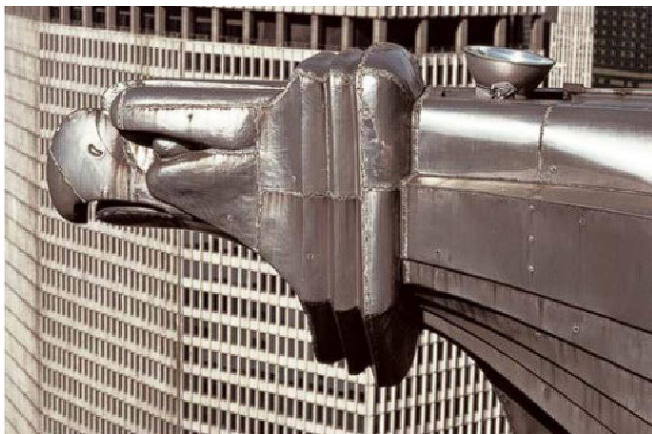


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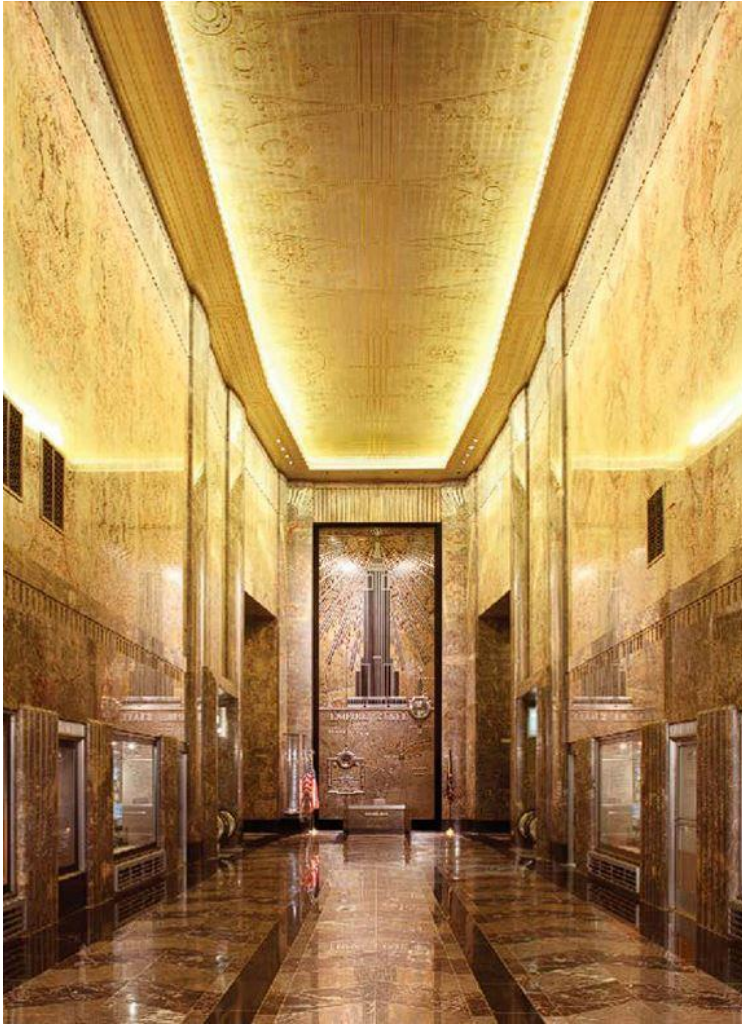


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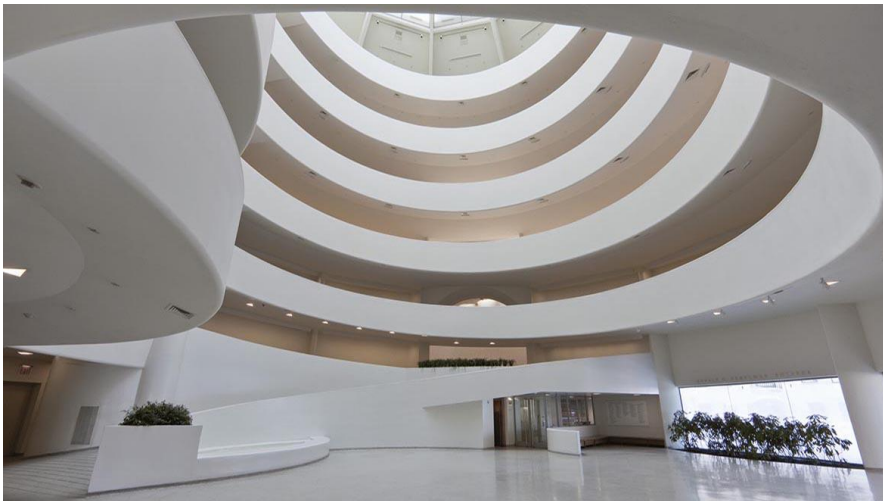


Figure 15: *General view of the Seagram Building and its Plaza* (Art In Context, 2022).



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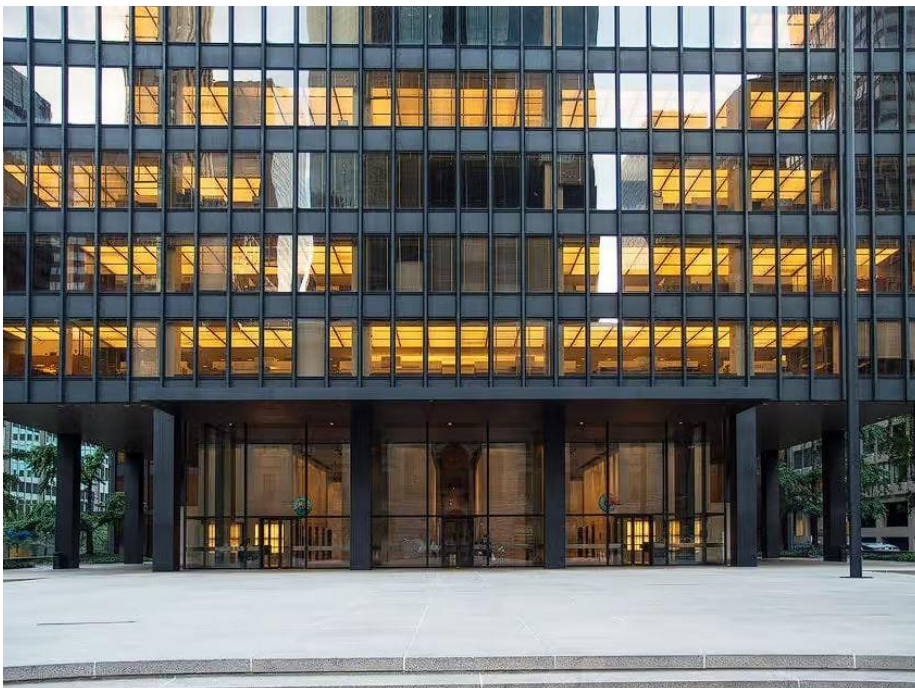


Figure 17: *Façade of the Seagram Building in detail* (Art In Context, 2022).



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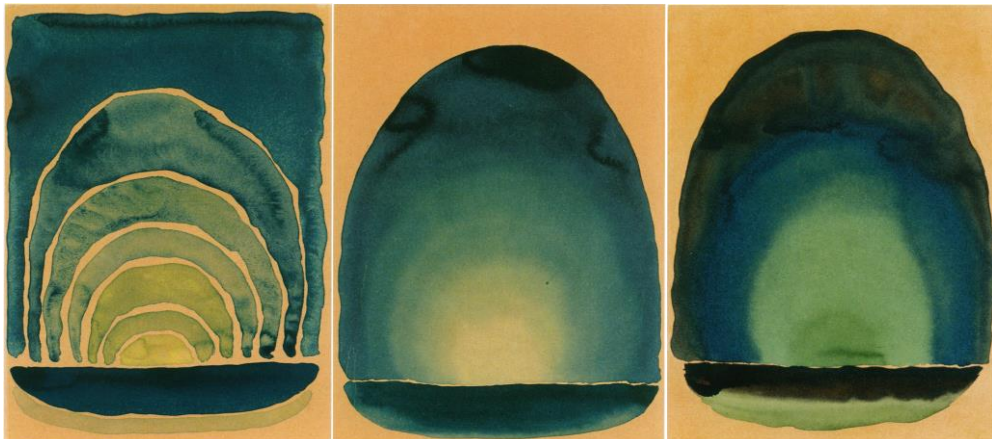


Figure 19: *Swing Landscape* (McComas, 2018).



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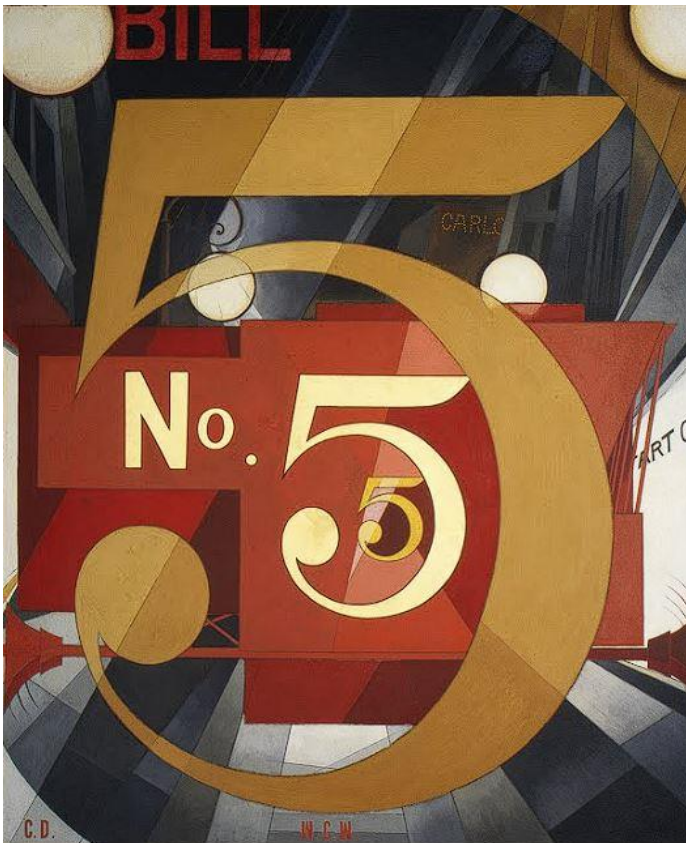


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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PWA- Public Works Administration

WWI- World War I

WWII- World War II

USIA- United States Information Agency

W.P.A.- Works Progress Administration

FDA- Federal Art Project

No.- Number

Fig.- Figure

RÉSUMÉ

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na popis hlavních charakteristik modernismu v Americkém umění a architektuře a jejich následnou identifikaci u vybraných budov a uměleckých děl. Na základě analýzy těchto budov a uměleckých děl a následného porovnání společných vlastností bylo zjištěno, že i přes na první pohled odlišný vzhled, tyto budovy a umělecká díla sdílejí vždy hned několik společných základních charakteristik modernismu. Tyto odlišnosti ve vzhledu jsou způsobeny především rozmanitostí modernismu.

ANNOTATION

Jméno a příjmení:	Ing. Michaela Abrahámová
Katedra nebo ústav:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Ondřej Duda
Rok obhajoby:	2023

Název práce:	Americké umění a architektura v období modernismu.
Název práce v angličtině:	Modernism in American art and architecture
Anotace práce:	Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá modernismem v americkém umění a architektuře. Cílem práce je popsat charakteristické rysy modernismu v americkém umění a architektuře a analyzovat vybraná díla známých amerických modernistických architektů a umělců.
Klíčová slova:	Modernismus, architektura, umění, americké, budovy, umělecká díla, 20. století
Anotace práce v angličtině:	This thesis deals with modernism in American art and architecture. The aim is to describe modernism defining characteristics in American art and architecture and to analyze selected works of well-known American modernist architects and artists.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Modernism, architecture, art, American, buildings, art pieces, 20 th century
Přílohy vázané v práci:	
Rozsah práce:	66 stran
Jazyk práce:	Angličtina