

Plate Transcriptions from: *A System Of Architectural Ornament* By **Louis H. Sullivan**

A series of 20 plates produced from 1922-1923

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Plate 1.

The Inorganic

Development of a blank block thru a series of mechanical manipulations which illustrate Mans initial control over materials and their Destiny.

No. 11 represents #10 developed with increased Freedom, but still largely in the mechanical mode.

Beginning appearance of the Imaginative element. - LHS 1922

Plate 2.

Manipulation of the Organic

Simple Leaf-Forms

By manipulation any of these forms may be changed into any of the others through a series of systematic organic changes known technically as: Morphology.

Compound Leaf-Forms

Derivations of the above; technically, but Organically, expressions of differing identities of seed-germ.

Technical Morphology of #7 into #12: Plastic changes, following Nature's meter & liberating energy.

Remember the seed-germ

Development of #13 Motif

Development of the #12 Motif

Note: For elementary knowledge of plant life: student is referred to: *Gray's School and Field Book of Biology* - LHS 1922

Plate 3.

The Inorganic: Manipulation of Forms in Plane Geometry

Mobile Geometry

Basic Elemental Forms: Shown inscribed in Circle

These simple forms, of ancient discovery and use, were given esoteric meaning and occult powers by the men of that day, in an effort to control, by means of formulas and secret ritual, the destiny of Man amidst the powers of Nature. With mystic numbers, and other phenomena, they formed part of an elaborate system of Magic: To which the world pinned its Faith.

More however a New Faith is advanced: a faith in MAN: an unwavering faith that Man, with his Natural Powers, developed and FREE, may and shall control his Destiny through the finer magic of his enlarged vision, and of his will to Attain. Master of the inorganic and the Organic, he will, when he has Found himself, become Master of Himself (see the Prelude to this work)

Technically, as an item in the progress of our Demonstration, the above forms, rigid in their quality, are to be considered, in our philosophy, as Containers of radial energy: extensive and intensive, That is to say: Extension of form along lines of axes radiating from the center and(or) Intention of form along the same or other radials from the Periphery toward the Center. Here then appears the Will of Man to cause the inorganic and Rigid to become Fluent, through his powers.

Note also that we assume energy to be resident in the Periphery, and that all lines are Energy lines. This may be called Plastic Geometry.

Diagram of: Circle with Inscribed regular Polygons. The circle is assumed to be the Primal Form

Radial Expansion of the Square (Sub-Center of energy, Sub-Center of energy, Sub-Center of energy)

Morphology of the Hexagon

Geometrical extension and intention conserve the idea of Axes, Morphology is a process whereby an original form gradually changes into Another form.

One example of plastic development of equilateral triangle

More Sub-Axes in 20.

The Sub-centers of energy may extend outward and inward indefinitely. Sub-Axes may be used at will.

Freer treatment of the Hexagon than shown above for the Triangle.

Our forms are gradually becoming Mobile, and the sub-axes and sub-centers of energy are coming into view. - LHS 1922

Plate 4.

Fluent Geometry

Rigid geometry here shown progressing, through Man's manipulation of a Central Idea, into Plastic, Mobile, and Fluescent (sic) phases of expression lending toward culmination in foliate and efflorescent forms.

Note: Clearly to grasp the significance of the approaching fusion of the Inorganic and the Organic into a single impulse and expression of Man's Will, the Idea must steadily be held in mind that the rigid geometric form is considered as a container of energy upon which a germinal, liberating will is imposed by Man's free choice, intelligence, and skill.

The Plant Organism derives its impulse from the seed-germ, and in its growth develops sub-centers of further growth. The seed-germ may thus be considered also as a container of energy, forming if its own will sub-centers of energy in the course of its functioning development toward the finality of its characteristic form - the expression of its identity.

The Awakening of The Pentagon

Pentagon in Action

Note: The rigid pentagon has vanished in a mobile medium LHS 2.22.22

Plate 5.

The Values of Axes

[Life is Infinite]

Axes with or without Sub-Axes: Selected at Random

There is always supposed to be a main Axis, however much it may be overgrown or overwhelmed by the vitality of its sub-axes. Herein lies the challenge to the imagination.

These arrangements may be continued indefinitely: THERE IS NO ENDING IN VALUES.

Remember the seed-germ (Axis)

Note: Any line, straight or curved, may be considered an axis, and therefor a container of energy, and a directrix of power. There is no limit to variation or combinations, or to the morphology possible. The main axis (of which the axis of the seed-germ is here taken as the primal type) may become secondary in development: A secondary axis may dominate all. Axes may be extended, restrained, combined, subdivided, made rigid, or plastic, or mobile, or fluent in every conceivable way. They may be developed inorganically or organically, they may be developed as stolid, or as filled with the life-impulse. They may be dramatized from the heavy and ponderous to the utmost delicacy of rhythm, the most subtile (sic) palpitations of life. But: That all this be taken from the realms of the Transcendental and brought into physical, tangible, even psychic reality, requires that the spirit of Man breathe upon ideas the breath of his living powers: that they stand forth, created in his image, in the image of his wish and will: as demonstrations of MAN'S EGO-POWER. - LHS 1922

The student is again referred to *Gray's School and Field Book of Botany* for a simple exposition of plant function and structure.

The advanced student who wishes to investigate the power that [antedates?] the seed-germ (which is easily in and of embryo) is referred to that remarkable work by Prof. Wilson - "*The Cell in Development and Heredity*"

No: For Further illustration see following plate.

Plate 6.

Manipulations of Variants

On a given axial theme

Diagram of main axis A and sub-axes B and C. See NOTE plate 5

The aspect of freedom is begining (sic) to appear.

B dominates, C dominates, A dominates, Equilibrium of the Branch. LHS 1922

Plate 7.

The Values of Parallel Axes

Note: The natural tendency of axes is toward fluency when once they are liberated from rigid geometry. The initial resultant-series of transition-stages from the inorganic toward organic, and the developed stages of fluency, are, both, of limitless variety and scope, and there ceases to be visible a distinct line of demarcation between them. Thus we come upon the truth that the creative reality of form lies within a continuous series emanating from a single primal life-impulse seeking and finding manifold expression in form. Life, itself, is thus manifested as a constant flow into countless multitudes of specific forms. - LHS 1922 *Transcribers note: in diagrams, axes are noted*

Plate 8.

Further Development [Parallelism]

For notations see sheet 9 - LHS 1922

Plate 9.

Interlude: The doctrine of Parallelism

We have now progressed to a point where it seems necessary and opportune to make a brief review of progress.

The Prelude to the series of plates sets forth in literary form Man's Natural Powers as the foundation of his deeds. Then begins as illustrated in the plates the development of a Technical Thesis, with the objective in view of exposing these powers in action, as applied to a specific form of activity called Architectural Ornament.

The out-working of the thesis as a science and an art is, of necessity technical, inasmuch as it involves a new conception of energy - and new philosophic (sic) and practical deductions therefrom.

The theme is therefore exploited analytically and synthetically; differentially and integrally with the object ever in view of so humanizing science that it energizes art and so exhibiting the masterful fluency of art that it in turn illumines science.

Between Science and Art there appears at first view a sense of separated parallel activities. Such mental picture of them softens as the Euclidean sense of parallel gradually enters a seemingly nebulous domain which we here call Parallelism. It were better and truer to call this domain mystic, for within it Art, Science, and Philosophy fuse as it were into a single vital impulse. In this same sense, the inorganic and the organic, - seemingly utterly apart - are caused to enter this same domain of parallelism, and fuse or blend into an integral phenomenon, - this time by the powers of man's imaginative will.

It may here be interjected the Imagination is the greatest of man's single working powers - and the trickiest; as the intellect is the frailest, the most subject to derangement, the most given to cowardice and betrayal, unless it be held steady and sane by the power of Instinct.

The power of Intellect is valid beyond a doubt. But folly comes when it is allowed to usurp dominion over Instinct.

The chief exhibit of intellect is called Logic; but the processes of Instinct involve a logic infinitely more subtle (sic), much more powerful - becomes primordial.

It is to this diaphanous labile logic of instinct, ever operative, and perceptible as processes involving certitude and finality, that the free spirit of man inclines - through sympathy with Life. For Life is of this transcendental logic, and exhibits it, first to the instinct and slowly thereafter to the intellect of man.

Such considerations open to view a still larger domain of parallelism: namely the parallelism between man and nature, and between man and his works. These are self contained within the all-embracing domain of Life, the universal power, or energy which flows everywhere at all times, in all places, seeking expression in form, and thus parallel to all things.

Man stands, by virtue of his powers, a solitary ego within a universe of energy; a witness, a participant; and, by virtue of his powers a co-creator, his creations are but parallels of himself.

It has been deemed urgent to devise this literary interlude, because, to evidence its varied suggestion apart, by graphic illustrations, would require space far beyond the limits of this work; ~ however interesting it might be to the advanced student to observe a scientific ~ poetic theory ~ or rather conviction ~ gradually unfold itself to the physical eye. It is to the inner eye therefore that a very considerable part of the appeal must perforce be made. Therefore what this work may lack in scientific continuity of gradual illustration must be compensated by continuity in sensibility and thought by the student.

Such process may proceed either way: as a sentient development on an intellectual background, or as an intellectual development on a sentient background. The illustrations may be traced back to their primitive origins, or the primitive origins may be followed in their expanding development.

Technically: Plate "7" is a simple study in two vertical parallel axes. Plate "8" is a further study in multiple parallel axes, both vertical and horizontal, with the introduction of distant parallels and fluent parallels - thus preparing for the larger idea of parallelism. L.H.S.

Plate 10.

Fluent Parallelism

[Non-Euclidean]

Note: illustration of non-symmetrical, rhythmical equilibrium [mobile equilibrium] - 5/1/22 LHS

Plate 11.

Values of Parallel Planes

[Parallelism]

Note - when Parallel planes become so numerous that their relative values are not immediately apparent they then lie within the domain of parallelism, as a group.

Note: Science here passes into an Art which envelopes it. - 5/23/22 LHS

Plate 12.

Title: Values of Overlap and Overlay

A Study in Virtuosity

Louis H. Sullivan [?] 6/7/22 Chicago, Illinois

Plate 13.

Interpenetration:

With resultant forms and development

Louis H. Sullivan [spect?] 7/6/1922

Plate 14.

Fantasy

A study of curves in three dimensions

Louis H. Sullivan [spect?] Chicago 7-18-1922

Plate 15.

Values of the Multiple Leaf

[Differential Energy]

Note: The energy comes from the characteristic seed germ (imagined).

The main stalk then differentiates into eight (8) specialized leaf-forms which in form differentiate.

There being no limit to character-expression, this design lies within the field of ROMANCE.

Louis H. Sullivan [spect?] Chicago Aug 29th 1922

Plate 16.

Impromptu!

Note: Stabilizing Value of vertical forms.

Note: we are now in the Domain of Virtuosity, Romance, & Symbolism.

Louis H. Sullivan: Oct 28th 1922

Plate 17.

A Geometrical Play-Ground

Louis H. Sullivan [spect?]: 12/25/22

Plate 18.

Untitled

Louis H. Sullivan [spect?] Chicago: May 15th 1923

Plate 19.

Untitled

Louis H. Sullivan [spect?]: 6/11/23 Chicago

Plate 20.

Finis

Louis H. Sullivan [?] Chicago March 19th 1923