

The English
Lecture.

The Denial of Deco.





Imperial India was to be administered, on the surface, through a court of polite Indian princelings. These would thrive, within the imperial universe of New Delhi, like exotic blooms tended by a carefully graduated domestic felicity in the light of the Viceregal sun. Their charmingly Palladianised planets would be embosomed in suburban verdure. Here they could gyrate, in precisely angular trajectories, within the gravitational field of the enormous Viceregal bungalow. All the buildings of New Delhi were 'country houses', performing the courtly ritual of 'garden-partying', gymkhana-ing, and polo in this most elaborate of Neo-Feudal constellations.

And so it has been the fate, in Britain, for Classicism to have been gripped by the limp hand of an upper-class Connoisseurocracy. The aura of conceptually stultified 'good taste' which has radiated from this aristocratic possession has tended to repel the intellectually or the politically active. Such latter persons tend towards Puginian Gothic or straight Modernism of the radically 'pragmatic' sort as promoted, for example, by the mid-20C Critic Reyner Banham.

In Continental Europe, Hellenic Classicism has been understood as a potentially complex intellectual artefact as well as an instrument of political action. In Britain it has seldom been more than a lifestyle badge of social status. Even its most brilliant practitioners, such as the early 20C Edwin Lutyens, planned a city as if it was a suburb of villas designed after the model of a country estate.

Andreas Volwahsen, in his comprehensive 'Imperial Delhi, capital of the Indian Empire', Prestel 2003, shows that Lutyens was chosen to plan and build New Delhi. This became the greatest architectural entity left by the " Empire - on which the sun never set". He was the architectural darling of that English country house culture founded by the invading Germanics on the ruins of Roman Britain - a culture which managed to divert every imported 'Architecture' from its properly Urbane employment to get another of the Outdoor Sports upon which the English built their curious culture.

The Romanoffs had not yet been executed, the Kaiser had not yet abdicated and the Hapsburg Empire had not yet fissured. Nor had the Continental branches of Queen Victoria's family tree been pruned by the economic and political turmoil of the first three decades of the 20C, when George V, the "Shah-in-shah Padishah, Monarch of Monarchs", at the climax of the vast Durbar of 1911, read out the decree which moved the Indian capital from hot, damp, commercial Calcutta, where it was beset by nationalist Bengalis, to the dry old Mogul capital of Delhi.

The first to plan the new capital was Lanchester. His extension of the city of Delhi was rejected because it would cost too much to displace the villagers of Pahanganj. His central axis would also have to be enlarged to swallow three Hindu temples. The inclusion of "Hindu architectural monstrosities" was not to Lutyens' taste. It was in vain that Havell, author of an history of Indian Architecture, argued for an architectural synthesis between East and West. Yet even Havell's labours had proved incapable of a decipherment of subcontinental Architecture that was sufficiently penetrating to provide the conceptual scaffolding needed for such an Architectural novelty.

Arguments rocked to and fro in both Delhi and London. References to every mighty conqueror, dominant empire, and monumental city were aired in the London Times. The site moved to the North of Delhi and then back to the South. An altercation ensued between the siting of Lutyens's Government House and Baker's Secretariat. It could never be resolved because it remains very clear that there was only one object of supreme value upon the site. This was not the new city itself, with its markets, its governing institutions, its universities and factories and the houses and schools and manifold other institutions. Nor was it even the housing of the Imperial Administration itself.



Lutyens and his Clients conceived of the new Capital as the seat of an imperial administration which set itself over and above all such emotive concerns as race, ethnicity or local culture - and indeed of politics itself. The hope was that a demonstration of an order purified of all functions except the most leisured rituals of a Feudal Court would remind the revolutionary movements of the 20C of the advantages of the good, impartial administration of the British Raj. The Native Radicals would combine in admiration of this magnificently selfless dedication to double-entry book keeping and regular steam trains and allow the British to continue ruling India, the 'Jewel in the Crown' of the Empire. New Delhi was not an instrument of Government. It was a field on which could be played courtly games that cemented the rituals of status which govern dynastic political structures. It was the Elysium of Victorian Neo-Feudalism - a world where the Servants did everything 'real' while the Masters wore splendid uniforms in the morning, played tennis in the afternoon, and waltzed in the evening.

The plan of Lutyens manifests none of the underlying forces of commerce and capital by which the Empire, through its 350 year trajectory, had been built-up to world dominance; creating huge political entities like the United States. There was neither bazaar, market, factory, or even bourse in Viceroy Hardinge's civic vision. This has, as yet, made it impossible to adapt Lutyens' Plan to its current role - that of the capital of the largest democracy on earth.

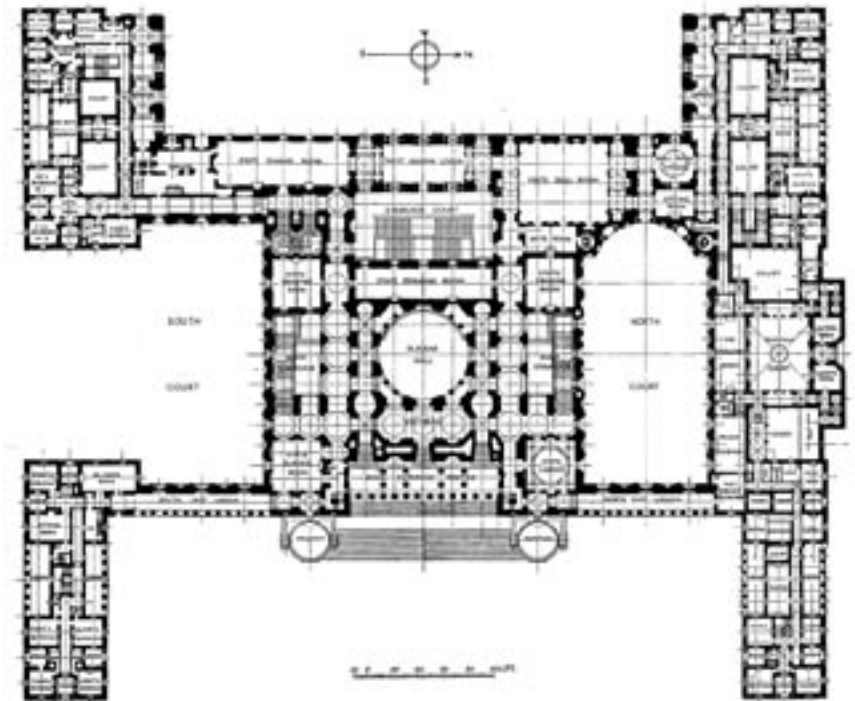
No, the 'Jewel in New Delhi's Crown was nothing more than the hugely inflated bungalow of the Viceroy himself. His domestic servants numbered, literally, in the thousands. His protocols, finely grading the ranks of Britons and Natives alike, filled volumes of bookish distinctions. His garden extended to an area capable of entertaining five thousand (official) guests. But the Palace still only sported the number of rooms (albeit vast and stupendously composed - their walls were up to 3M thick) of an Edwardian Country House.

Lutyens was the proper architect for this funerary oration. He entombed the languid elegance of Edwardian India in a machine whose main virtue was its "impartial and incorruptible" (the bywords of the ICS) detachment from local reality. Lutyens hated both Hindu and Mogul Architectures, even though they are lacy with verandahs and overhanging roofs and water-channels and every clever device for climatic amelioration.

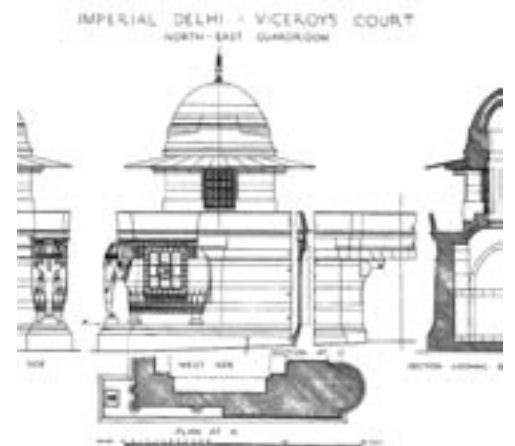
Lutyens never invented an 'Oriental' icon of any originality. Those that he employed, like the chhatris and jaalis of the Moguls, or the balustrading of the Sanchi stupa which 'friezes' the viceregal dome, were collaged into his compositional engine as politically-correct sub-continental pastiche.

If he had troubled, or even had the literary background, to decipher them, then he could have reinvented them as his own instead of either refusing or bowdlerising them. His Indianising inclusions are mere sops designed to quieten the insistent clamour, on all sides, led by the Viceroy Lord Hardinge, that he make a synthesis of Europe and the Orient. Lutyens was as incapable of the understanding required for such a synthesis, as his Anglo Clients were of judging its success. Both cultivated a refined iconic illiteracy and a studied ignorance of the meaning of Vedic art and architecture. Indian culture was something the natives could practice, like other unmentionable acts, within the privacy of their native quarters. Ignorance of such things was regarded as a prerequisite of good administration, especially after the Mutiny of 1857-59. Proof of this gallant intellectual abstinence can be found in the fact that the first Western texts on Hindu Architecture that were recognised, by the Indians (such as Tagore), as having some intellectual value (after 300 years of British engagement), were written by the Viennese Art Historian Stella Kramrisch, a refugee from Hitler's pogroms, in the 1930's. Kramrisch went on to curate the Indian collection in the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

Fig. 33. Viceroy's House in New Delhi. North-south section (above). Ground plan of the main story (below).



The Viceroy's House was the domestic sun round which revolved the whole Neo-Feudal universe of New Delhi. Lutyens used the classic English Country House plan, of the letter 'H', which is designed to obtain good views from every room over a green parkland and good day-lighting from tall windows into its long, narrow, wings. Old Delhi, with its brilliant sun and hot winds is a city of cool dark courtyards that secure oases of green within screened walls. New Delhi is a parkland of be-gardened bungalows. One must view its fabulous geometries from a helicopter. Hardinge's Viceregal bungalow is its biggest 'villa'.



Vollwahren quotes Lutyens who wrote on Sept 16th 1913, that "Chattris are stupid, useless, things". Lutyens collaged motifs from Buddhist and Mogul architecture. Ironically for 'India', as she became after partition, Hindu architecture was ignored.



The 'Indian Lutyens' had difficulties with windows. He hardly ever puts any into his main facades. One could never know who might appear at one and 'domesticate' the gyrations (like huge steam pumps) of his giant lithic engines. Lutyens quarrelled with his co-designer, Herbert Baker, about many things. Baker set himself the task of inventing architectural icons for each of the Indian departments and princely states. Lutyens advised him to desist, remarking (with words that echo with redoubled force amongst the iconic deserts of the 20C lifespace, "Architecture begins where literature leaves off".



'Goddards' is typical of the scores of Country-House projects that Lutyens realised with brilliant facility - picturesque, mannered, and formally uninventive when compared to his eccentric contemporary Frank Lloyd Wright. His formal conservatism allowed Lutyens access to the shadows of a Roman Classicism that Wright absolutely anathematised. It also ensured the quality of refined sterility that the Anglocracy likes in its Public Buildings.

Lutyens constantly struggled to rebuff the pressure to include fragments of 'local colour'. He rebelled, rightly, against his work becoming a mere museum of bits and pieces lifted at random from a conceptual context that he neither understood nor cared-for.

The British of the 20C, unlike their compatriots of the 18C, **no longer took Indian wives or dressed in Indian clothes. Kitted-out in pith topees and khaki shorts**, the tennis-playing Raj neither sat on carpeted couches or went down to the bazaar. Insulated, by armies of white-clad servants, inside the gardened plots of their white-painted bungalow-cantonments, they circulated at the summit of the Indian caste-system.

Nothing practical was allowed to soil the daily ritual. This was especially so for the British mem-sahib. **She must neither cook nor sew. She was not even welcome inside the kitchen. Menu consultations occurred in the Drawing Room. Invasions into the world of work threatened to displace the over-numerous hands of her loyal servitors. The Raj of the early 20C pursued a ritual of rigidly-imposed pleasure and leisure which made the superstars of Hollywood look like DIY homebodies.**

The lifespace of the Raj had become, since the Mutiny, an English microcosm that included less and less of India. It was inevitable, proper and historically tragic that the monument to the Raj should have been built during this time, **by a country-house architect, to celebrate its most futile and decadent period. It is only the universalising power of the fluvial plan and the monumentalising felicities of Classicism'**, however betrayed by the suburbanising Anglosphere, that has preserved 'Lutyens' New Delhi from contemporary extinction.

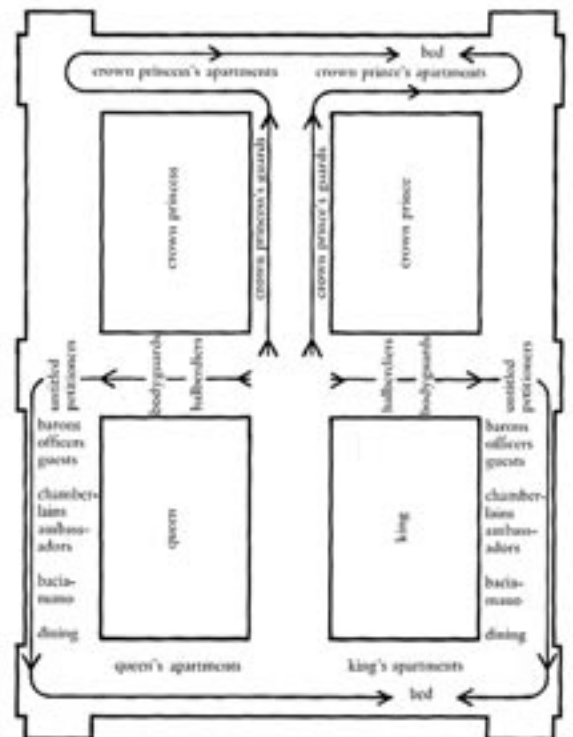
Jawaharhal Nehru, who received India's Independence from Mountbatten, retained a French Architect, Le Corbusier, to design a new capital and capitol for Chandigarh. It was an urbanistic failure even greater than New Delhi. Yet it is one of the tragedies of history that an early-20C French Urbanist did not design New Delhi, for then it would have been the diagram of a modern (or rather, Moderne - Art Deco), Beaux-Arts city with a political economy suited to what it has become, instead of the useless compilation of afternoon carriage drives through a bungalow-suburb which it is today.



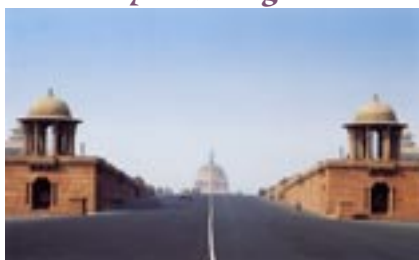
While New Delhi was a mere field of leisure whose palace-villas provided a Neo-Mogul theatre of conspicuous consumption, the Bourbon palace of Caserta was a real engine of administration. George Hersey describes, in 'Architecture, Poetry and Number in the Royal Palace of Caserta', how the royal apartments were sandwiched between two floors above and two floors below in which lodged and worked the imperial administration. The honorific rituals of kingship were performed in the 'piano nobile' of the four quarters of this vast engine. The Court of the King gyrated around one of the four courtyards. That of the Queen circulated around another. Those of the Crown Prince and Princess rotated their courtly pleasantries around the remaining two quadrants. Yet this was no idle game designed to pass the time in an English Country House. Spiral stairs connected the gradiloquent Royal chambers with four layers of administrative expertise. The Architect who kissed the hand of the King had to be prepared to receive the Royal Legal Adviser, or the Cost Consultant, who had either climbed up, or dropped down, from his bureaucratic hideaway to materialise, in the flesh, via some invisible jib-door to confront him with the realities behind his beautiful drawings.

The servants of the Viceroy no longer worked, as they did for the Bourbons of Naples, in a sandwich of cellars and attics that connected, via spiral stairs, to the Royal apartments in the 'piano nobile'. The Imperial Administrators of the Raj worked (as did those of the rustics of Le Jardin Anglais) 'off site'.

Baker's Secretariat, necessary to the 'running of the Empire', as the current phrase had it, was set adrift by the privacy-oriented domestic ethos of the fin-de-siecle country cottage. Lithic shiploads of Imperial servants floated, anchorless, up and down the Viceregal carriage drive until they finally lodged, ironically, on the summit of Raisina hill, Viceroy Hardinge's original choice for the site of his house. Displaced upstream, Lutyens's Viceregal palace vanished from view, - all except for the tall dome. Lutyens was beside himself with fury and chagrin. Baker had outwitted him.



Hershey's plan of the piano nobile of the imperial Bourbon palace of Caserta, near Naples, shows the four royal courts circulating around the four palace courtyards. The Executive, worked by professional Administrators, was layered two floors above and two floors below this genitally-authenticated 'aristo filling'.



Lutyens's "Bakerloo", as he wittily dubbed it, was self-imposed, for Lutyens conceived of the city plan that sank from view (if only temporarily) the full vastness of his viceregal palace below the horizon of his 'Rajpath'.

Baker's magnificent Secretariat would create the 'first impression' by dominating the first half mile of processional prominence. Lutyens' viceregal bungalow, the biggest ever built by British India, remained, like Wellington's troops at Waterloo, unseen behind the brow of the hill. Lutyens thought that he had lost the battle of Raisina Hill. But he had won the war of the Delhi plan.



The chagrin of Lutyens's was self-imposed. The record shows that it was he, and no-one else, that invented the final city-plan, which created the jack-in-the box Viceregal Palace.

This plan, No 12 in the history of New Delhi written by Andreas Vollhausen, also shows that Lutyens, like all practitioners of application and genius, intuitively understood the iconic sequences of the 'story of the river-valley'.

Plan 12, and no other, begins, on the left, in the Source/ Garden' and ends, to the right, after passing down a semblance of fluvial 'event horizons', and ends, on the right, in the river Jumna acting as 'Okeanos'.

Lutyens planned a Marina, formed out of the river Jumna, at the right hand, lower, end of his fluvial history. Lady Hardinge, the first Vicereine to rule from Lutyens' new House, decreed that this should be, instead, a Stadium. Maybe she dreamt of flashing young male limbs, glistening in the sunlight. One thing is certain. She was (unsurprisingly) an urbanistic illiterate. Today the extension of the axis of Lutyens is blocked by the concrete orifice of the All-India Stadium, beyond which post-Imperial, democratic, Delhi stretches its hectic chaos without the slightest genetic genuflection to Lutyens. Enormously impressive at its time, the imperial Classicism of the late Raj proved totally infertile. It engendered nothing, nothing at all, of the New India.

Knowing the ethos of the Anglosphere, a 'deltaic' marina, even had it been dredged and built, would soon become the theatre of some aquatic sport-fest. Its iconic symbolism, as the tridentine field of erasure and epiphany, that event-horizon before the final dissipation into the infinitude of dispersion by 'death in illumination', would have been swamped by the trite rituals of stopwatch competitions. Thomas Jefferson preferred to visit late 18C Paris for its intellectuality. But he admitted that big-brother Britain was supreme in two departments of culture: that of precision engineering, especially mensuration, and gardens, What more apposite religious ritual, for such a culture, than the clocking-up speed of records on the grassy swards of the garden Albion?

The larger physical sports are best performed in disused gravel workings or covered sheds - far away from the city centre. The shaping of cities should never be distorted by the requirements of 'sporting contests'. But if sportsmen want such as the Palio of Siena, or the Corso of Rome, or the Monte Carlo Rally, that are merely accommodated to the city that is already an urbane narrative, then they are to be encouraged for the additional dimension that such events adds to metropolitan 'chic'. The sporting tail should never wag the civic dog.

Demolition order looms large over swathes of Lutyens' New Delhi

Western conservationists have reacted with horror at plans to demolish a vast swathe of Sir Edwin Lutyens' New Delhi complex.

They have warned that the Indian government's proposals to replace 20 per cent of the colonial capital - 100 bungalows - is 'probably the beginning of the end' for the much-admired 1930s development.

The World Monuments Fund (WMF), which has New Delhi on its '100 Most Endangered Sites' publication, is leading the campaign against the proposals.

'This is an extraordinary thing to do,' said Colin Amery, director of the organization's London branch. 'It is a wonderfully large area by one of the world's greatest architects.'

Amery, who is president of the Lutyens Trust, also hit out at plans to replace the houses with high-density residential accommodation. 'There seems to have been almost no thought given to what will go in place of the bungalows,' he said.

He added that the New York-based WMF had launched a lobbying campaign - together with India's Fine Arts Commission



The former Viceroy's House, the centrepiece of Lutyens' New Delhi

and the Indian National Trust - to get the proposals shelved.

The WMF has won the support of London architect and heritage campaigner Richard Nightingale. 'Once they've done this the government has set a precedent,' he warned.

'Many people in India are concerned that this is the beginning of a creeping demolition process and part of a much larger plan to replace the complex with buildings that are inappropriate.'

Nightingale also said that Indian officials have admitted

there are no plans to provide the area with a conservation strategy or 'instruction on the kind of buildings that should replace the bungalows'.

However, the Indian government insisted the move - which UK's Britain's Heritage's Adam Wilkinson described as 'extremely concerning' - was no cause for alarm.

It dismissed the criticism, insisting that the bungalows earmarked for replacement have already fallen into a state of disrepair, and added little to Lutyens' masterpiece.

Ed Corbett

No-one during the 60 years since Indian independence in 1947, has come forward with a sympathetic conversion of the magnificent plan, into a proper city. Ye, if one studies the example of other cities that were being planned, and built, in the early 20C, it is easy to see how it could be done.

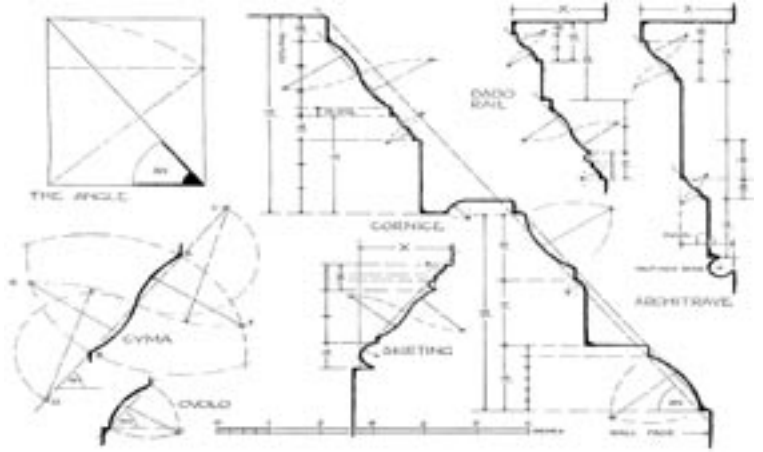


Fig. 62. Capital profile in perspective or elevation. The drawing is a technical drawing of a capital, showing its profile and various parts. The drawing is a technical drawing of a capital, showing its profile and various parts. The drawing is a technical drawing of a capital, showing its profile and various parts.

Lutyens's novel 'Delhi' capital is a dry and stunted drum, like a stalk whose Corinthian leaves have been plucked from it, leaving only the sockets from which they sprouted. Or it recalls the sprockets of a gear wheel, with others meshing in below it. It is the axle of a machine that turns the four smaller 'cowbell'-wheels which hang from its square abacus.

The Delhi capital elegantly summarises the quality of Lutyen's spatial compositions and even the layout of the city itself, as physically compelling constellations of circular geometries that gyrate with a detached perfection - achieving that most 20C of 'artistic' ambitions - presence without representation.

New Delhi 'is'. But Why it exists, and for What, is not revealed. New Delhi is not an instrument. It is a 'work of art'.

Yet Lutyens was brilliantly inventive and witty when employing that fraction of Germanic-Alpine rusticity that made his reputation as an inventor of rural retreats. A similar level of invention abandoned him when he dealt with the alien aesthetic of Italy. One may see from the quality of his classical mouldings, how slight and diffident was his vocabulary of surface.

The function of mouldings is rhetorical. They exist to project the actors voice as he speaks his lines across the limelights. In the case of a 'trabeated' Architecture it is to animate the members (the so-called columns and beams) of the 'frame', to the level at which they serve to reify the iconic texts inscribed within their lively embrace. In the case of the late-imperial, early 20C, Lutyens and his patrons, there appeared to be no message which they either wanted to or were capable of enunciating. As I have John Harris describe, on page five of my Third Lecture "The End of Urbanity", an (interior) 'architecture parlante' couched in the tongues of Mediterranean Classicism, was hardly ever spoken, and never fluent, in the Anglosphere.

By the early 20C even those places on the Continent where it had been spoken with more ease and force were finding themselves succumbing to a creeping paralysis akin to an iconic lockjaw.

ONE CAN EXCUSE LUTYENS FOR NOT EXERCISING HIS SYNTAX OF MOULDINGS IF THERE WAS NO SEMANTIC OF INSCRIBED 'PICTURE' PLANES WITH WHICH TO SPEAK ANY IDEAS. YET WHAT A WASTE THIS WAS OF THE PENT-UP ACCUMULATION OF STONE-CARVERS, GLASS-BLOWERS AND METAL CHASERS WITH WHICH INDIA SEETHED AT THAT TIME, INDIA EVEN CONTINUES TO SUPPORT THEM INTO THE 21C. SUCH A WASTE OF RESOURCES STRIPS ANY PRETENCE OF ICONIC COMPETENCE FROM THE ARCHITECTURE OF NEW DELHI.

The 'Roman' Lutyens has always been, rightly, admired for the power and felicity with which he composes the gross flesh of a building. Equal to this is his disposition of the organic cavities of these beautifully 'classicised' bodies. But his mouldings remain untouched by this creative energy. They sleep, like the princess before the kiss of the Prince, flat-breasted, deep-frozen, virginal and girlish. Devoid of muscularity, it is as if Lutyens was afraid to allow them to exercise their proper power.

Lutyens was (and indeed remains) the model of the perfect Establishment Architect for the Anglosphere, with compositions that were large, solid, austere and void of patent meaning. He could turn the compositional felicities of 'Rome' to beguiling and forceful account. But the aesthetic of India rendered him entirely insecure. He was personally taciturn and opposed to the literary culture of Architecture. Situated within a British Raj which refused to open the Indian ethos to its own keen intellects, it is hardly surprising that Lutyens declared his open opposition to the 'Indian' and used it only under duress.



Kahn's elevator doors are original creations which employ the synthetic syntax so brilliantly advented by Cubism. Yet there is nothing in them that prevents a discourse between Westernity, and the hybrid of Islam and Hinduism created during the centuries of the Muhgals. Lutyens' introspective Romanitas, like the politics of the departing English, undid the Mughal synthesis.

Ely Jaques Kahn is the relatively unknown hero of the New York version of the Moderne of the 1930's that flowered after the French Exposition des Arts Decoratif of 1925. It went on to become the American 'state style' of Roosevelt's new Deal. Indeed there was more good Moderne amongst the Indian Princes than there was in the Raj. There was more too in Argentina and Australia than in England. This was a style, that while seemingly inspired by Amerindian art, flowed as easily from the Viener Werkstatte, Kahn's Continental antecedents, as it did from an American genius like Lloyd Wright. As chastely enamoured of smooth surfaces, as it is richly complex in their inscription, this variant of the Moderne would have perfectly suited a modernised 'Indo-Saracenic' iconics.

For the fact cannot be avoided that there was, at the time that Lutyens was inventing New Delhi, an aesthetic which would have been capable of animating the stellar wastes of Delhi's Roman universum. Indeed what Vollhausen reports as Lutyens' sole ornamental invention, his 'Delhi' capital, echoes with the hard-edged, mechanistic, aesthetic of the Franco-American Moderne.

But 20C design (whether post - '45' War Modern, or the more ornamental post-1918 War Moderne), was mainly regarded by the British establishment as **culturally, and therefore politically, subversive**. One may date **this volte-face, by the most 'modern' culture in 18C Europe**, to the turning of Edmund Burke from a radical into a conservative, at the time of the Revolutinary Terror. **'Modernity' has been, since Bonaparte, the ethos of the state in France. In Italy it was introduced as the state style by Fascism. In Germany 20 years of aesthetic and cultural Modernism were arrested by Hitler. A similar fate attended it under Stalin.**



The architecturally perfect forms of the spherically cross vaulted ceilings of the Viceregal corridor, above, are inscribed with lacy doodlings. These have all of the iconic force of paper doilies. Their 'framings', in spite of frantic writhings, fail to obscure the fact that they project no 'prospect'. The architectural engine purrs with the finely engineered power of Lutyens' exacting proportional calculations. It is betrayed by the inability of the Anglosphere, even at the apogee of its Imperium, to project a lifespaces culture that rises above the level of an extreme, and shameful, iconic subliteracy.

The British Establishment reserved early 20C Moderne, like 18C Gothick before its Victorian apotheosis, to the reserve of 'immorality' - hotels, theatres, cinemas, night-clubs and so on. When Modernity came to Britain, in the 1950's, it came as did Puginian Gothic, accompanied by a sanctimonious priggishness that reserved it to the dwellings of the deserving poor and the institutions of their labour, health and education.

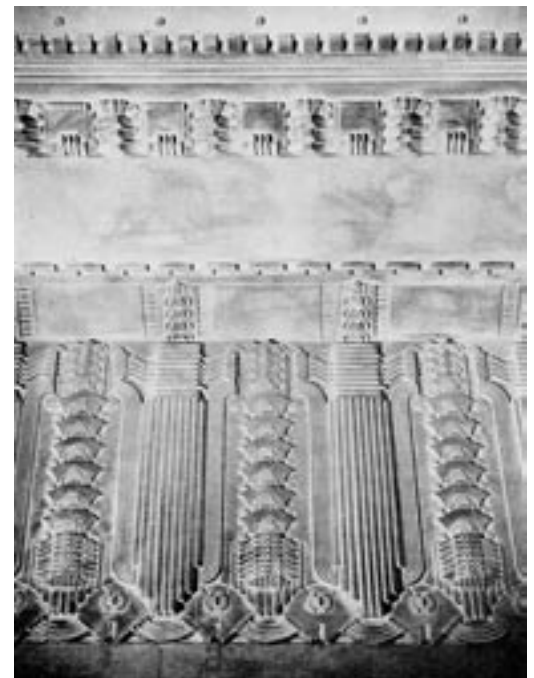
Can one wonder that the 'working class' rejected this Existenzminimum, welfare-modern, creating their own 'pop' culture in response to the cheeseparingly subliterate ethics of the State Meritocracy? So, whereas the Modernity of the Continent is expensively-made, serious, rational and often dull, what Modernity of quality there is in Britain is either muted by Establishment disapproval or vitiated by the ambition to "epater les Bourgeois".

Too iconically illiterate to think of decoration as anything but a vulgar display of wealth, the Anglosphere spent lakhs of rupees on heaving up lumps of rock carved into spherical domes. It then failed to inscribe them with a cargo of ideas.

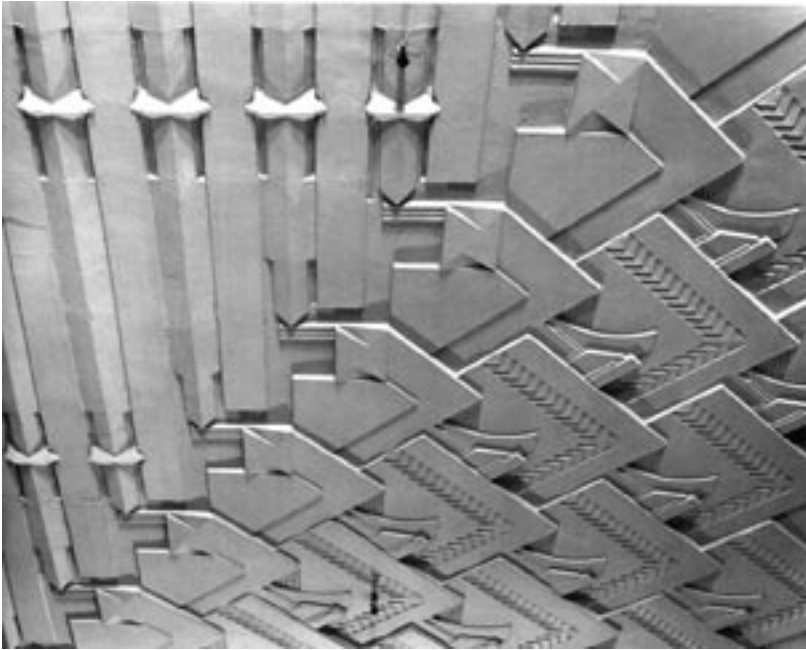
To look deep into the mental eyes of the Viceregal Palace is to see all the way to the back of a head whose burnished pages remain chastely voided of script.



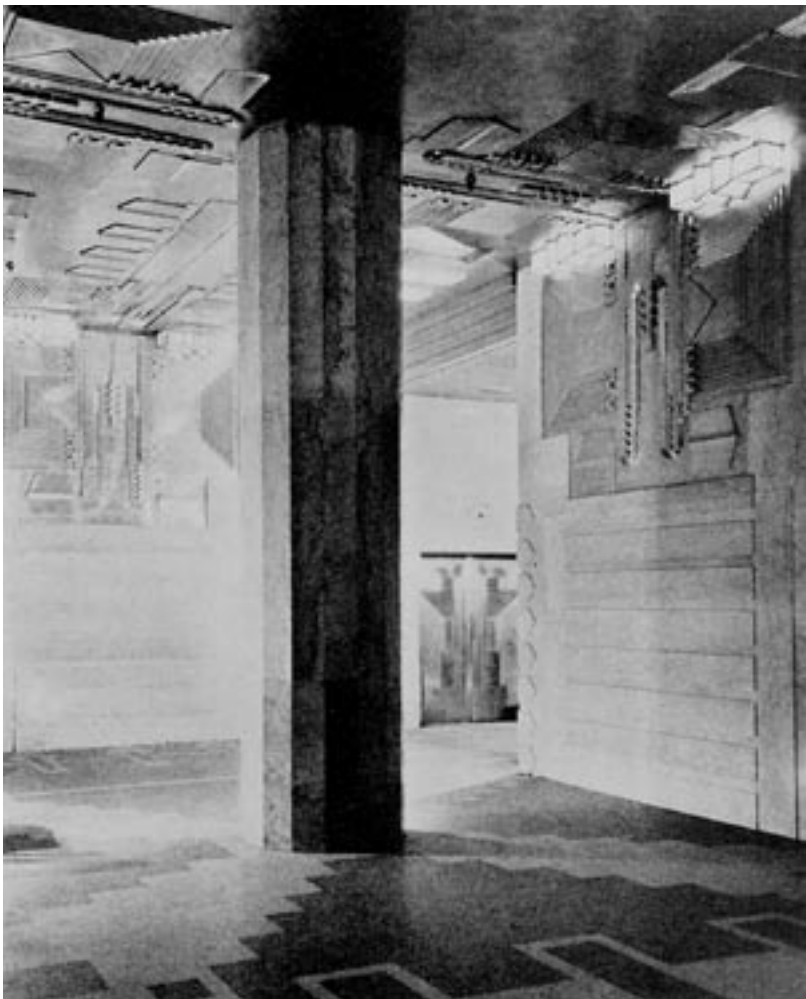
The beautifully curved ceiling of the Durbar Hall, honorific focus of the viceregal palace, is inscribed with the creamy whitewas of some travelling commissioner's 'dak' bungalow. The vaulted dome, in the trabeated classical architecture which Lutyens employed, is a sail from which the veil of the coffered entablature has been removed. Its smoothly inflated surface billows upwards with the 'pneuma', the breathing speech of conceptuality cargoed by the rafted entablature. The whole architectural apparatus exists solely to project this iconic text upon the dome. Without such an inscribed surface, these domes and vaults are reduced to a conceptual ruin. Lutyens' geometries are a spatial engine whose exercise confirms a state of iconic vacuity and ethological impotence. It was, in the parlance of the time: "an Awfully Good Show". But, one may ask, of What?



I do not suggest that the inscriptional technique of Kahn should have been transcribed by Lutyens without alteration. I show it merely to illustrate a contemporaneous medium, in use all over the globe, which, in the hands of an iconically-literate culture, could mediate (even) a mating between the Roman and the Indo-saracenic.



What is the significance of this brilliant composition, at 275 7th Ave. by an obscure commercial architect? From whence these forms? To what do they they lead? Frank Lloyd Wright, Kahn and many like him, all over the USA and the entire planet, 'outwove' these warps and wefts of pattern. No text has ever 'deciphered' them.



The lobby of the Holland-Plaza building needs to be shown in the colour that was photographed for Kahn's Film building. Seemingly owing much to Amerindian precursors, Kahn's iconic vocabulary resonates with the Eastern Orient from which the 'Indians' walked to America across the Bering Straits! Home at last!

It is one of the unsolved mysteries of Western Art that the early 20C explosion of abstract surface design, of a level of invention and fluency which stretched all the way from the entirely gross to the subtly refined, seemed to carry with it **no iconic sophistication whatever**. Its **non-figurative character** was entirely novel to Western design. From the Egyptians to the 20C nothing like it had ever been done in Europe - at least on such a scale.

Perhaps Its iconic vacuity was a precondition for its birth.

But why did it never 'educate' itself and acquire a semantic cultivation to its syntactic fluency?

Could it be that the time of its flowering, in France and the USA, from the Exhibition des Arts Decoratifs to the invasion of Hitler, was so tragically brief? Fifteen years is not a long time to acquire an intellectualised iconography after the one, current for a half millenium since the Italian Renaissance, finally crashed and burned in the trenches, along with the courtly culture of the Ancien Regimes that Italian classicism projected. Yet it is plausible to conclude that the Moderne would not have emerged as a global force if not for the forcing house of the 1914-'18 slaughter.

Reading the essays of Wright, as those of Ely Kahn, one is struck by the discrepancy between their **brilliant, moving, radically novel work** and the **sad banality of their texts**. It is clear, with hindsight, that the Moderne was either the brief sputtering of a self-consuming light (that of a conceptualised lifestace-inscription), **which had already expired with the Ancien Regime**, or the first flames of a fire lit by the first World War that was extinguished by the second.

What was there for Europe to say to the wider world, in 1945 - after Belsen? America was shocked, by Pearl Harbor, out of the streamline style suburban innocence of the 1930's (to which it longs, always, to return). Modernity, such as the patently confident Moderne, seemed difficult to sustain after Hiroshima, under the shadow of the Bomb.

KITCHEN-SINK EXISTENTIALISM IN EUROPE, AND WIND-KEROUAC IN THE USA, BECAME THE POST-'45 DEAD-BEAT PULSE OF MODERNITY.

The Imperial Britain of the 1930's saw itself as a **bastion of sanity**, founded on **old-fashioned common sense**, that was surrounded by Ancien Regimes collapsing under an excess of **misplaced traditionalism** accompanied by excesses of **political rationality** under **Communism** or **Fascism**. No stable foundation was to be discovered, either, in the **Futurism** projected by the skyscrapers of New York. If this was capitalism, then, in the 'Great Depression' it was heading out of control.

The 1914-'18 war, and the collapse of respect for the systems of leadership and government involved (rightly or not) in the carnage, was the **final cause** of this abandonment of "the old ways". Britain, whose overseas Empire was **not only intact** but actually augmented by the **Treaties of Versailles and Sevres**, remained, it seemed, ethnologically unscathed. There was little inclination, in its Establishment, to **espouse Modernity in the public way** that it was pursued in the seemingly less fortunate nations.

Yet persons of the wealth and audacity needed to commission works of Architecture, were not averse, in the privacy of their homes and other milieus of a less than public aspect, to entertaining the ethnological novelties of Paris, or the syncopations of American Jazz. One still shopped in Paris for clothes and, above all, jewels. Jewels, also, have always been of importance within India.

Jewellery is designed for public display, and to bring focus to the design of an habit, or costume. One would have looked at these pieces not only for their value, but because they projected, as the commentators of the time attested, not only a quality of novelty (which one must always expect of fashion), but also an **archaising air**, which was termed, at that time, 'savage'.

It is this which allows me to assert, once again, that there were **iconic models**, which must have been known to the **English Establishment**, capable of mediating between the calm geometries of Roman Architecture, the seeming savagery of the **Mogul heritage**, and the very un-English **architecture of Hinduism**. It is probable, however, that, in contrast to the French or the Americans, the possibility of extending this new, **Moderne**, aesthetic to the entirely public, and even gross, scale of buildings, never crossed the mind of **Lutyens, Baker and Viceroy Hardinge**.



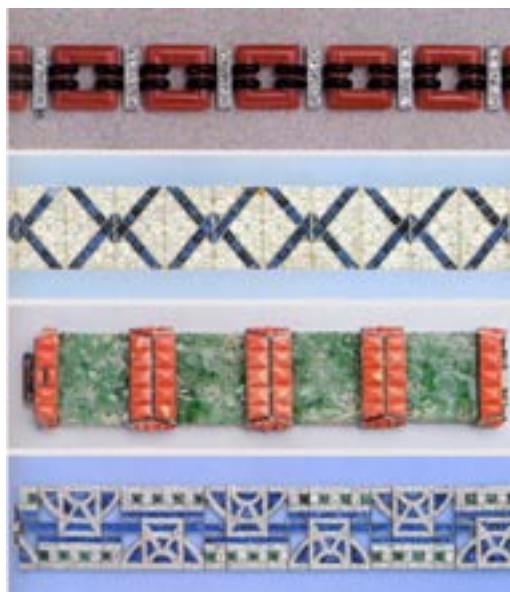
A champlevé enamel by Jean Goulden gives the lie to all the nonsense spoken about the difference between 'Fine Art and Applied Art. There are few 20C 'abstract' paintings as good as this.



This 1925 enamel bracelet by Dunand is less ambitious than the Goulden casket. Its relation to the bracelet shape is less clever than its pattern.



The enamel brooch by Boucheron has not escaped from the predictable lines of Art Nouveau. This 'imprisonment' was the chief defect of Deco.



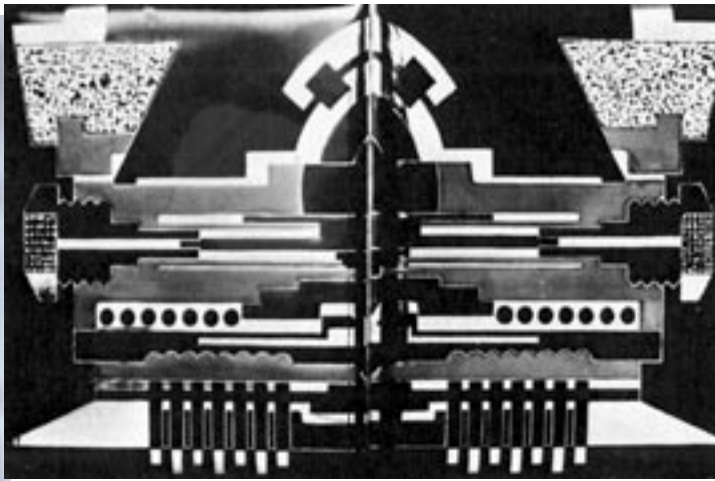
All of these bracelets have left the 'Nouveau' behind them but have not yet mastered the freedom given by 'Cubism'.



Magnificent Arm-band and Pendant 1929 by Marianne Geitel, Berlin.



Armband, made in Berlin by Marianne Geitel. From 'Schmuck' of 'Theodor Fahrner'. published 1990.



Cigarette case by Raymond Templier in silver and Lacquer with an 'eggshell' panel. Only half of the design would normally be seen - making it asymmetrical.



A beautifully 'free', cigarette case by Gérard Sandoz from Jean Fouquet's Bijoux et Orfèvrerie, 1931.

Jewellery is a 'photolithic' (as will be described in Lecture 15), material in its very essence. It synthesises an obdurate materiality (what is harder than a diamond) with an aspirationally ideal suffusion of the material body with both light and 'all-through' colour. The jewellery of the 1920's and '30's went far beyond the relatively invisible mounting of rare gems. 'Moderne' jewellery achieved a compositional felicity that assimilated all materials capable of 'through-colour'. It passed from the category of 'bijouterie' to that of 'parure' - the medium of a pure and unfettered garbing in the sense of 'appearing'. Jewellery became 'declassified', penetrating, as its 'costume' version, through all social and financial classes, even to being worn while sea-bathing!



Brooch by Raymond Templier in white gold diamonds and green and dark grey enamel made for the 1925 Paris Exhibition has a symmetrical composition around its centre yet retains an axial progression.

Prompted by the '14-18 war, and the new century, an aesthetic of discursive rhetoric came suddenly into being that played the full formal gamut from heiratic symmetry to relaxed, playful, asymmetry, from totalised, closed, compositions to chaotic, aleatory, 'endless' repetitions. It was a brilliant explosion of form, pattern and colour - capable of any iconic essay.

THIS INVENTIVENESS ELICITED NO ANIMATION AT ALL FROM WRITERS, THEORISTS AND 'HISTORIANS'.

It was the ambition of these writers to renew the semantic capability of Western art. This was the self-assumed responsibility of the Siegfried Giedions, Henry-Russell Hitchcocks, and Nicolaus Pevsners with the Alfred Barrs and Philip Johnsons who promoted them.



Earrings in Silver and enamel 1927 by Marianne Geitel, Berlin From 'Schmuck' of 'Theodor Fahrner'. published 1990.



A-symmetric earrings in Silver and enamel 1927 by Beatrice Ost. From 'Schmuck' of 'Theodor Fahrner'. published 1990.

By ignoring the Moderne they Failed their Medium. Leaving it iconically trivialised and unable to survive.



It was not all plain sailing in the new world of the Moderne. This pavilion, from the 1925 Parisian Exhibition, was erected for Printemps, makes two machine gun pillboxes into the capitals of its apotropaic entry jardiniere-columns before 'ruining' them with overflowing vegetation. They give on to a generous plate glass 'shop-window' (the doors slide to either side) to what would have, to the 1920's, strongly recalled the armoured turrets of the Maginot and Hindenburg Lines. The carapace of this fortified casement seems pock-marked by projectiles. In fact they are small holes through its solid skin. Each one is roofed by a blister of glass, letting light filter into this empowered space, the form of a funeral pyre, or tumulus. Was it tumescent with the new life of the Moderne, or was it the ash-cone of a cindered culture?

They may not have gone to Paris for their shopping, or even entered a 'picture palace', let alone watched their flickering fictions, but neither Lutyens, Baker or the Viceroy would have been entirely ignorant of the chaos of taste and the violent variety of styles that roamed the West in the 1920's. No doubt this danger fortified their joint agreement to Herbert Baker's pious prescription that "There should be no conscious straining after invention or originality, to which sincerity in following the true and natural laws alone can give birth". What his meretricious platitudes meant in the hands of Viceroy Hardinge was that the main axes of Lutyens' plan should link the crumbling tombs of the Moguls to the new ones being raised to the spirit (soon to depart) of the British Raj.

Vollhausen argues that the Lutyens' stellar plan is a hexagram signifying some obscure dedication to the occult, and Freemasonry. Nothing more arcane is needed to explain its magnificently hermetic, self-regarding, geometry than its focus upon a structure of necropoli, both ancient and modern, and its rigorous exclusion, by this coterie of latterday court choreographers, of any vestige of the structures of commerce FROM WHICH THE BRITISH EMPIRE DREW ITS LIFE AND FORCE!

There was always it is true, a Shopping Centre in all of Lutyens' plans. It was built, somewhat inconsequentially, to one side of the main axes, on the site of Razaika Bazaar. A Bazaar, however, it never was, being merely an inward-looking series of concentrically circular streets, focussed upon a garden. The 'soft centre' ensured that no market stalls could be erected and certainly nothing like a popular assembly, riot, or, as any such jollity was known - a 'tamasha'.

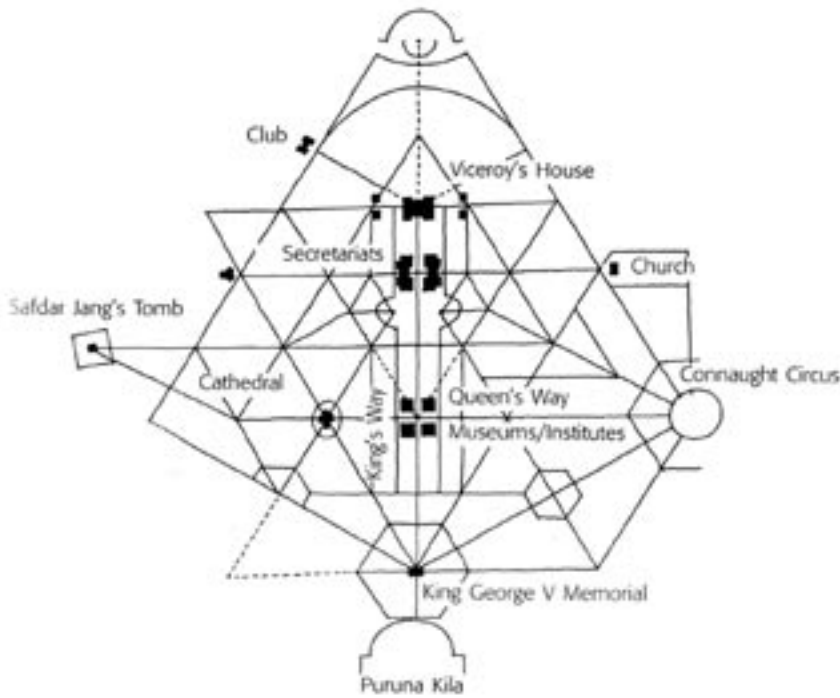


Nor was the Moderne entirely chaste if one sailed over to the New World itself. The 'Picture Palace Style' took Mediaeval Hindu Architecture as its ultimate copybook for the fantastic, exotic and luxurious Architecture that the new cult of celluloid thought proper for its entirely blacked-out screenings. Not even late 20C Las Vegas has extended its style library to this degree of sculptural, gold-standard, full-on, plagiaristic, enthusiasm.

Now adapted (it would seem with a well-judged respect for the 1930's original) to serve as "The Church of the Reverend Ike", this was originally Loewe's Picture House on New York's 175 Street.



Herbert Baker was a man who could tie his own bow tie. Here is Lutyens' co-architect as the perfect WASP MD. The most important professional tool of the Double-breasted Doric Architect was his Savile Row suit. Baker's vest pocket kerchief spills from it in luxuriant effusion, signifying a soul of passion beneath a well-disciplined exterior.



Vollhausen's all-too Continental attempt to invest his history of Lutyens' New Delhi with some (even any) sort of intellectual dimension is reduced to inedifying toying with the occult qualities of the Hexagram. What is more tellingly revealed by his diagram is the sad fantasy of a politico-economic strategy that plans a new city with no place for either independent legislature or judicature. What more proof is needed of the viceregal fantasies of Hardinge and Lutyens? Further evidence is the displacement of the 'wisdom of the plaza' - the place of marketing where the producer meets the consumer - to the remote insularity of Connaught Circus while placing four (!) Museums where it should have been, at the crossing of the two main axes of the (vertical), Rajpath and the (horizontal) Janpath.



The Legislature was given the closed, facadeless, visage of a tholos-tomb. The gas would rise from the speeches of the powerless politicians of Imperial India, as their collonnaded perambulations circled to return to a Sisyphean conclusion. Not for them, a forecourt, a facade and a stage on which they could even address the Viceregal Executive, and be addressed by him. The Viceroy was the Feudal, Neo-Mogul Emperor of the Raj. New Delhi is the monument to the anachronistic myth of Monarchy which radical, progressive, England had so powerfully reinforced after the French Terror. Lutyens' Delhi has done nothing for the republican constitution of 20C India.

I was the third generation of my family to live in India. I can feel little but shame at the ludicrous monument to a futile dream of Neo-Mogul politics that my grandfather's generation left in Delhi. This, the largest piece of deliberately planned urbanism ever constructed during the whole of English history, was such a travesty of modern, rational politico-economic constitutionality that it has proved impossible to 'develop' it coherently to some rational end associated with its new guise as the focus, the hearth, of the globe's most numerous democracy. I do not know what to be more sad about: the refusal of the British Raj to monumentalise a proper 'polis', or the inability of India, in the succeeding half-century to convert it into one.

Lutyens final act of constitutional topicide was his design for the 'All India House of Representatives'.

He gave the Viceroy's bungalow-palace a huge forecourt, addressed it with an enormous flight of steps and welcomed all into its embrace with a giant portico. Its architecture spoke of a discourse between the great multitude and a Viceregal institution with which all were amiably and openly engaged. Even Baker's Administration of clerky Civil servants fronted huge pillared balconies, great flights of steps and wide plazas that gripped the main axle of the city.

Lutyens deliberately denied his 'All-India' Parliament any such 'frontal engagement' with the city, and the nation that it soon came to govern. Its destiny, under the Raj, was to remain neither legislative, judicial or executive. It was a globe of make-believe, destined to 'offer advice' through some litany of (smoke?) signals that might issue from its central axis. The 'native politicians' were bound to this wheel of a building so that they might exhaust themselves in an endless cycle of meetings and speeches.

The Representatives of All-India could perambulate around their first-floor portico and reflect that their Sisyphean task was to spin it in ineffective freedom because they lacked any point of engagement which could lock them into the stellar geometries of the Lutyens' Delhi-Plan.



Juan Gris painted "Violin and Draughtsboard" in 1914. Corbusier described the novelties of Cubism as "merely ornamental"- and "like an oriental carpet". Yet he allowed a Juan Gris painting as well as a Kazakh carpet, to ornament one of his most original inventions, the "Immeuble-villa of the 1925 Exhibition's Pavillon de l'Esprit Moderne.



Picasso made this painting in 1914. Corbusier foolishly criticised Cubism as 'meaningless'. In fact Cubism liberated painting so that it could focus on the narrativity of symbols, newly liberated from being the attributes of the protagonists of some mythic tableau. Here the 'feminine' violin has become Eve's apple.

Yet it is pointless to criticise the inventors of New Delhi for avoiding any contact with Modernity when **its most radical protagonists**, such as the young Edoard Jeanneret, soon to become **Le Corbusier**, shared both a contempt for ornament and a belief that Painting and Architecture should distance themselves from literature, both as meaning and narrative.

Both Lutyens as well as Corbusier proposed that if any underlying intellectuality was needed for Architecture (an idea both were as likely to deny as to affirm) then it could only be provided by some magic of 'numbers'.

Such arguments are no more than symptoms of the theoretical confusion into which the architectural 'tradition' fell after WWI.

Architects use a special technique to mediate their work. It is the preparation of very exact and detailed drawings, as well as copious written descriptions, of what the workers and workshops must create in order to realise the final building.

THESE DRAWINGS ARE COVERED IN THE VERY EXACT AND DETAILED MEASUREMENTS NEEDED TO ENSURE THAT ALL OF THE HUNDREDS OF DISTINCT PARTS FIT TOGETHER ON THE PLACE OF THEIR FINAL ASSEMBLY.

Architects are **always using simple arithmetic** to make sure that the distances between two objects allows a third object to fit between them. To raise this mundane and necessary **'numbering'** up to the level of a Neo-Pythagorean pseudo-science is the sort of **feeble-minded attempt at intellectual elevation** that has depraved architectural literature ever since that **dumbing-down of architectural theory**, which both Vitruvius Pollio openly admitted, in the 1st century a.d., and Le Corbusier in ours, was judged necessary to **suit Architecture to a Western culture ignorant of its Capabilities.**



Gris was monumental, Picasso had wit. In this 1912 collage of a viol, Picasso achieves an architectural gravitas that still remains the animated, slightly comic, act of a man at work.



'Maroc' by Amedee Ozenfant, 1919. Corbusier called Ozenfant's technique "that of a mystic". Ozenfant gave Corbusier the 'visual culture' through which he conceived the forms of his Architecture.



When Gris, a great painter with a slower mind, essayed the more self-consciously 'cultured', 'architectural' and programmatic 'Synthetic Cubism' his work collapsed into the puerility of commercial art.

Corbusier, in 'Avant le Cubisme' (Before Cubism), published in 1918, describes Cubist paintings as "merely ornamental" as well as "inherently meaningless". Corbusier found neither of these qualities objectionable, although he rated being meaningless more desirable than being ornamental: as he put it, "like an Oriental carpet - of which he preferred Kazakhs. But then did he know the iconography of carpets? In 'Après le Cubisme' (After Cubism) Corbusier promotes the 'Purisme', which he learned from Amedee Ozenfant and which became his own way of painting. Ozenfant was both a painter and an engineer. Ozenfant came from a family of engineers, and had designed, and helped to machine, the body of the 1912 Hispano-Suiza automobile which Corbusier published, somewhat cavalierly, to prove his argument that machines were created, independently of their makers, by the force of the 'modern' zeitgeist (of which Corbusier was the one true voice). c.f. Lect. 18 'Machine Politics' Pp2. But what did Purisme do but reduce all shapes to those of the tabooed 'Classical Mouldings'?



"The Siphon" by Fernand Leger 1924. Leger is the painter all Architect-Modernists admire. Everything is tubular, metallic and weld-jointed - and without the kitsch 19C rivets for which the English have a weakness.



"The Siphon" of 1921 by Le Corbusier. Enormously 'architectural'! Stone-coloured, with its vertical central axis both splitting and uniting cave-shapes to each side. Entry is through the barred and arched door at the bottom, the siphon-lever is even a climacteric crucifix.



In the "Pears and Grapes" of 1913, Juan Gris worked with the peculiarly narrow iconography which 'Purist' painting made its own - that of the 'domestic equipment'. He looks down, in 'engineering drawing' plan view, onto table, chair and floor. Yet how munificently animate, and replete with dramatic force, is both the syntactic and, through this liberality, the semantic charge, of Painting - as opposed to the iconic faiblesse of the 'Engineer-Architect', to the right!



If anything could prove that the role of Architecture is to 'project' the iconic field of a painterly syntax, and its more liberated semantic, it could be the comparison between the Gris to the left and this good (for Ozenfant) 1921 'Purist' painting titled "the glass of red wine". It was the professionally jealous refusal of Architects to foreground 'painting' that caused the 'dumbed-down' techno-space of the 20C.

Purist painting, as 'proved' by Corbusier and Ozenfant, focussed its 'semantic field' onto an iconography of semi-transparent vases, jugs and bottles. These are all alimentary domestic icons of a feminine hollowness. The viol, permanent sign of the feminine torso, and talisman of the Cubist 'nature morte', was seldom absent. What was the 'meaning' of this extremely tight perimeter to Corbusier's laager in the fight against both 'ornamentality' and 'meaning'?

Corbusier often described his graphic output as a 'research'. It was his way of engendering, each day, as he rose fresh from sleep (for he 'painted' in the morning), a family of forms with which he could compose the architecture of the new, cleansed, deracinated, 'Purist' lifespace that he craved. A close examination of Purism shows that what Corbusier (the ex-interior-decorator) had to do, nominally every morning, was to exorcise, as from a nocturnal nightmare, all references to any semantic vocabulary - even the pathetically infantile one of the Cubists!

The Anglosphere, even though it occupied its enormous Empire (or indeed because of it), made a point of insulating itself from the turbulence of Continental politics. Britain suffered the slaughter in the trenches. But we had no Ancien Regime to collapse as did those (all populated by Victoria's offspring) of Germany, Austria, Russia, Spain and Greece - not to mention the Ottomans.

THE OLD ORDER HAD COLLAPSED BY THE SECOND DECADE OF THE 20C. WHAT BECAME MODERN ART TOOK-ON THE ROLE OF EMERGING FROM THE RUINS OF THE WEST TO LIVE LIKE PRIMITIVES.

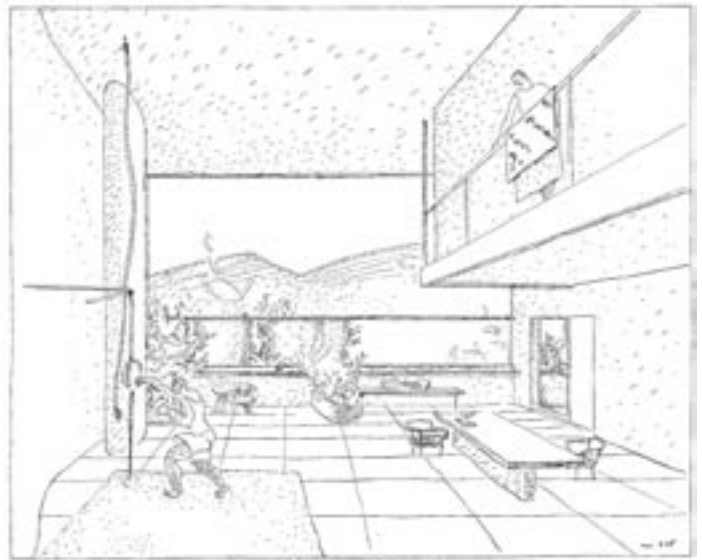
Contrary to the popular myth of Modernist histories, the iconography of the so-called 'Heroic Period' (1918-1938) had **nothing of conceptual 'grandeur' to it. It retreated into the arms of 'Mother', in the shape of the ample, tubular odalisque of the woman as kitchenmaid, together with her mammarian receptacles. This the Purists then deracinated into a an intellectually puerile cult of "pure forms".**



Young farmboys with no aristocratic military ethos to support them were conscripted to the trenches. They cried out for their mothers as they died on the barbed wire of Belgium. This Léger described their last vision before extinction. This was the very 'unheroic' (but very understandable) fount of the iconography of Purism.



Léger again, in 1920, reveals the woman as agent of domestic comfort, this time set against a background as iconically barren as any 'deserta cartesia' by Mondrian. She is rotated, like a Hindu Goddess, into the alternating reifications of recumbent seducer and upright provider - again proffering the 'domestic equipment'.



When the new Pope is announced, a Turkish carpet is unrolled from a high window. The woman gazes fondly from her balcony as her man battles to preserve the orderly ground of the domestic lifespace from the savage forces of a Corbusian 'Nature' in the shape of raw (Swiss) mountains untamed by any trace of Alpinists (A development proposed for Geneva, 1928)



Corbusier's 'Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau' at the Paris 1925 Exposition des Art Decoratifs attracted its political chief to award it a medal. This was vetoed by August Perret, who made the original introduction of Corbusier to Ozenfant. Perret judged that "It had no Architecture in it".

Léger is mainly transparently 'legible'. It is his exquisitely alienating technique that disarms what would otherwise be 'chocolate-box' histories. One remains ignorant of Ozenfant's ambitions. The purpose of Corbusier's 'painting' never altered. It was to impregnate his Architectural enterprise with forms that arose from the Rousseauistic infantilism with which he hoped to escape from the iconic incapacity of the Old Order.

Notwithstanding the post-domestic iconography of his Purist researches, Corbusier's ambition for the house was to evacuate its interior of all reminiscences of Art, History, Culture and any such "cultural load" and suspend it in the empty air. He gave this New Vacuity a 'view' that went beyond the mere rusticity of the Jardin Anglais to encompass horizons of...yes, one might say 'heroic' grandeur. He published the idea, with a passionate conviction, that his new dwelling could obtain the prospects obtained from an ocean liner, or an aeroplane.

What, beyond bombs, could be more destructive of 'Urbanity' than this view of "une verdure sauvage"?



The most desirable 20C apartments in a dense city like Paris raised the lowly attic 'pente', the abode of maids, artists and children, to a 'penthouse' with a roof garden. Corbusier proposed the 'jardin suspendu' for everyone.



Corbusier's idea was to take the high-ceilinged city cafe, with its mezzanine and propose it as the apartment's 'hanging garden'. A brilliant idea, it has after nearly 100 years, yet to be realised.



Looking out from the hanging garden of the 'Immeuble-Villa' one sees the force of the idea of Beatrice Colomina that Corbusier's (shop)-windows of glass were 'modern' murals on the theme of 'Nature'.

AFTERWORD for the EIGHTH LECTURE: 'THE DENIAL OF DECO'.

New Delhi remains the largest, fully-built, city-planning project in the entire history of British Architecture. It was a Garden City of Roman bungalows, one of whom, in Akbar Road, was my boyhood home for a time. They were set in a hierarchichy of constellations around that of the Imperial Agent. Lutyens deliberately distanced his Architectural genealogy from its sub-Continental context. In this he reversed the promising progress made over the previous centuries when the Raj created Indo-Saracenic hybrids. When the imperial funcions of New Delhi ceased it proved impossible to use Lutyens' princely planetarium as the basis of a city of 'normal' or even 'ideal' type. It suffers the ususal futile conflicts, therefore, between being useful and being 'Art'.

Lutyens, situated firmly within English 'Country-House' culture, ignored the rise of the Moderne, across the Channel in Paris, in New York and not to mention everywhere else from A for Argentina to Z for New Zealand. As a result, both he and his Clients entirely failed to invent a decorative vocabulary for the interiors of his great creation, a fact made glaringly obvious upon the numerous dull grey cement saucer-domes inside the Viceragal palace.

Not that he, Britain's greatest Architect of the early 20C, was alone in these omissions. Le Corbusier, also, although trained as an interior decorator for his first thirty years, and taught how to paint 'Purisme' by the Engineer Ozenfant, also ignored the fertile decorative essays of the Moderne. Corbusier, instead, proclaiming the beauty of Cubism to be its meaninglessness, converted its compositional felicities to the planforms of houses and rooftop playgrounds. Bathrooms, especially, proved a fertile medium for the deployment of the de-semanticised 'Purist' syntax.

Both of these Architects, amongst the greatest of the first half of the 20C, ignored the revolutionary formal power of the Moderne to inform the banal necessities of 'building' with a conceptually-structured surface. Corbusier, especially, proclaimed the new "whitewashed" vacuity as "revolutionary" and, as had Loos before him, a mark of 'Modernity'. Seen 100 years later, after the semi-decorative delinquescences of Decon, the 'whitewash' looks more like what it actually was - a total inability to invent a modern, or even Moderne, iconology, and behind even that, as we have discovered, the refusal to employ an 'Order'.- as had done every other Architecture for nine millenia.

Not that this failure was unique. There was an attempt, in the mid-20C to assimilate 'Deco' to Modernity. But it failed. The failure, as usual, was intellectual. No persuasive iconography was invented. Then again, in the early 21C, the great V&A 'ART DECO' Exhibition again failed to make any sense of its subject. It travelled the world with its best 'shot' - that Deco was "good fun"! Is this subject impossible or are the Savants just incapable?