Figuration/Abstraction

Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe 1945–1968

Edited by Charlotte Benton

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Economically speaking, the period immediately following the Second World War was a prosperous one for Switzerland. Whereas neighbouring countries were in ruins, Switzerland had been spared. The Swiss had witnessed the disasters of the war from a safe distance. Virtually untouched by the war, Switzerland’s pharmaceutical and light industries gained considerable advantage over their European competitors during the late 1940s and 1950s. Furthermore, Switzerland now became one of the world’s leading financial centres. The establishment of bank secrecy in 1934 – a protective measure taken by the Swiss banks during the period of the Depression – attracted international capital. Banking became the backbone of the Swiss economy. A popular saying characterized Swiss bankers as resembling dwarfs – or gnomes – in fairy tales, who secretly excavate and hoard subterranean treasures. They were said to control enormous reserves of gold which lay stocked in the vaults of the bank headquarters at Zurich’s Paradeplatz. The ‘gnomes of Zurich’ became a striking metaphor for the mysterious power of the Swiss bankers.

As far as public monuments are concerned, the war brought little change. Switzerland’s decentralized structure, its cultural dependence on Germany, France, and Italy, the absence of a monarchical or aristocratic heritage and the Protestant, iconoclastic tradition of the larger cities such as Berne, Zurich, Basle and Geneva, had never been favourable to the erection of public monuments. With the exception of the popular Monument to Wilhelm Tell, 1895, in Altdorf and the Monument to the Reformation, 1909–17, in Geneva, most public monuments from the pre-war period are of local interest only.

In fact, the Swiss seem to prefer ephemeral exhibitions to static monuments. Since the late nineteenth century Switzerland has had a tradition of holding National Exhibitions – the most important being the exhibitions in Zurich in 1939 and Lausanne in 1964 – where works of art by prominent sculptors,
painters and architects are presented to a broad public. Traditionally, some of the sculptures exhibited in these exhibitions have remained on public display. Jean Tinguely's *Eureka*, 1962–64, his first monumental sculpture, was a major attraction of the National Exhibition held in 1964 in Lausanne. It was bought by the private Bechtler Foundation - which had been instrumental in securing the work of Alberto Giacometti for Zurich - and given to the people of Zurich as a gift.

Besides these major exhibitions, various smaller, regional exhibitions are regularly organized. The most influential among these is the Swiss Exhibition of Sculpture in Bienne, founded in 1954, which, over the years, has featured Swiss sculptors such as Jean Arp, Alberto Giacometti, Bernhard Luginbühl, Robert Müller, Henry Presset, and Jean Tinguely. Some thirty sculptures remain throughout the city today (see Documents, 71). However, public commissions for monumental sculpture were rare until the 1970s - the most famous being Jean Tinguely's *Carnival Fountain*, 1977, in Basle.

The most successful among these sculptors was Max Bill, one of Europe's most popular artists in the post-war period. His sculptures figure prominently in various cities and on university campuses throughout continental Europe. Born in 1908, trained as a silversmith at the School of Applied Arts in Zurich in the 1920s, Max Bill studied at the Bauhaus in Dessau for another two years, from 1927 to 1929, before settling in Zurich. In 1931, at the age of twenty-three, he married a wealthy wife, built the first of his own houses, started his own art collection and pursued his, as he said, 'serious hobbies, namely painting and sculpture'. His artistic concept, as he put it, was already 'clear at that moment'. Bill soon worked simultaneously in virtually every field of artistic creation - thus embodying the universalist ideal of the Bauhaus. He was an architect, a painter, a sculptor, a graphic designer, an exhibition designer, a product designer, a writer, a teacher, a publisher, a curator, a politician and - during the war - a Swiss soldier.

In 1947 Bill exhibited his first public sculpture entitled *Continuity*, 1946–47 (see Figure 12.1). Three metres high, and made of reinforced plaster, the sculpture was installed on a bed of boulders in a small park on the lake of Zurich. Bill had chosen the site for the temporary installation on the occasion of the Zurich Kantonale Gewerbe- und Landwirtschaftsausstellung, a local commercial exhibition. Early in 1948, shortly before its scheduled removal, the sculpture was destroyed by vandals. A press campaign followed which triggered one of the first public discussions on modern art in Switzerland. Various internationally known artists wrote letters supporting Bill, and the press spoke largely in his favour. Spectacular colour photographs of *Continuity* with night-time illumination were widely published. The sculpture became a symbol of Switzerland's open-mindedness and its attachment to modernist values.

On an allegorical level, *Continuity* can be read as the very emblem of Bill's links with the formal vocabulary of pre-war modernism. Its title speaks for itself. The dynamic form of the sculpture promises to transcend the collective trauma of the war and the German Zusammenbruch (collapse) and to express enthusiasm for the post-war Wiederaufbau (reconstruction). The perfectly smooth surface and its white colour recall the purist, classicist aesthetics of Theo van Doesburg's *Concrete Art* as well as the sculptures of Georges Vantongerloo. Furthermore, the curved shape of *Continuity* echoes the exhibition hall designed by the Swiss architect Robert Maillart, a landmark of the Swiss National Exhibition in summer 1939 (see Figure 12.2), and it precedes Bill's own favourite project, the construction of the Lavina-Tobel Bridge at Tamins, in the Swiss Alps, in 1966–67 (see Figure 12.3).
The exhibition of Continuity marked Bill's breakthrough. In 1953 he received an honourable mention (Third Prize) for his contribution to the international competition for the Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner (see Documents.
art during the German Realismusstreit (realism debate) after the division of Germany. (Simply put, the Realismusstreit was about the idea that non-figurative art expressed 'Western' qualities and figurative art embodied 'Eastern' qualities. Both sides accused the other of being reactionary and politically corrupt either by the United States or the Soviet Union.) As a Swiss, Bill was, of course, neutral, and was also beyond suspicion of having collaborated with the Nazi regime. As an alumnus of the Bauhaus he actively propagated the heritage of Bauhaus ideas. When Inge Scholl, the sister of two students from Ulm who were executed in 1943 in Munich for their anti-Nazi propaganda, launched an initiative to build the Hochschule für Gestaltung (Institute of Design) in Ulm, West Germany, Bill was commissioned in 1949 to design the building complex. The foundation received matching funds from the American government and followed the post-war 'reeducation for democracy' programme of the American military. Bill's influence went far beyond designing the school; he acted as the founding director of the Hochschule für Gestaltung from 1955 until his resignation from the school in 1957. Again, the topic of continuity was his leading metaphor, and the prospectus of the Hochschule opened with the sentence: 'This school is a continuation of the Bauhaus ...'.

As the Ulm project failed, due to internal conflicts, Bill focused his attention on Switzerland again. He worked for the Swiss National Exhibition in Lausanne, the Expo 64. Already a graphic designer for the Swiss National Exhibition in Zurich in 1939, he now designed the 'Educating and Creating' section and installed the 'Court of the Arts' - an open courtyard where gold-covered sculptures by Swiss artists were displayed. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s he produced various large-scale sculptures for public spaces, predominantly in Switzerland and Germany. These include the Family of Five Half Spheres for the Mathematical Institute at the University of Karlsruhe, 1966, the Continuous Surface in the Form of a Column at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich-Hönggerberg, 1953/1977, and the Monument to Albert Einstein, Ulm, 1982. The high points of his career were the commissions for the headquarters of the Union Bank of Switzerland in Zurich – the Pavilion Sculpture, 1983 – and for the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt, Continuity, 1986, a larger version of his breakthrough sculpture of 1947 (see Figures 12.5 and 12.6). By this time, however, his work had lost its interest for the realm of art criticism and discourse. A retrospective exhibition organized by the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt in 1987 passed largely unnoticed by the booming art world. Bill's case seemed to be closed. And by the time of his death, in 1994, his writings, his architecture and his design attracted more attention than his art.

There is, obviously, a considerable difference in Bill's validations by his various publics. Whereas his importance for contemporary discourse reached
its peak in the 1950s and early 1960s, his popularity among scientists and bankers culminated in the 1970s and 1980s. In other words, if we consider the question of 'strategies of public sculpture' we cannot explain Bill's popularity exclusively by the fact that he linked the brutally interrupted project of European modernism of the 1920s to the period of Wiederaufbau in the 1950s. Why should the two most powerful banks in Germany and Switzerland, in the 1980s, turn to Bill – rather than, for example, to Henry Moore, Richard Serra or Eduardo Chillida? Why would the Deutsche Bank choose to rebuild an enlarged version of Continuity, after almost forty years, if the meaning of his work resides solely in its linkage to modernism? There has to be another way of reading Bill’s sculptures. In order to re-open the case of Max Bill, I will focus on the particular situation of Switzerland in the early post-war years.

By and large, Swiss national identity since the late 1930s was based on the paradoxical and non-representable ideology of ‘armed neutrality’. While a broad consensus prevailed about the ethical value of this neutrality – one of the reasons why Switzerland was spared by the war – there was no way of representing it visually. In fact, the representation of the national identity of Switzerland had always been problematic. In the 1840s the female allegorical
The figure of Helvetia was invented to personify the young state which was founded in 1848 after the model of the constitution of the United States. However, Helvetia, the serene motherly protector, remained an abstract concept and never became as popular as her romantic Alpine forebear, the heroic Wilhelm Tell. Helvetia featured in public monuments such as the Geneva National Monument, 1869, by Robert Dorer, or the World Telegraph Monument, 1922, by Giuseppe Romagnoli in Berne, as well as in advertisements for the booming tourist industry. In the twentieth century she mainly survived in the collective imagination because of her presence on Swiss coins (see Figure 12.7).

In fact, after the Second World War money became, like neutrality, an important yet difficult-to-represent element of national identity. With the growing importance of Switzerland as a centre of financial transactions, money literally turned into Switzerland’s main resource. In the absence of natural resources like coal, iron ore or access to the sea, the prosperity of Switzerland depended on the continuous flow of international money. Its importance increased during the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the gold reserves drawn from the United States to Switzerland, Germany and Japan. The recession in the United States in the 1970s was marked by the abolition of the gold standard, which had equated the dollar and the price of gold since the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1944. While the dollar was devalued in 1971, Switzerland, Germany and Japan took over the role of the world’s currency reserve. In consequence, the relationship of the Swiss population towards the Swiss banks changed. Whereas, during the pre-war period, banks had been generally considered as hostile institutions serving the upper class, they now became an integral part of Swiss cultural identity. More and more, the Swiss became proud of ‘their’ gold and ‘their’ gnomes.

On the other hand, the fact that Switzerland was the only country in Europe except Sweden to have remained untouched by the Second World War marked the Swiss conception of history. There were no traumatic memories to be represented. Switzerland lacked a perspective towards the past as well as towards the future. The Swiss writer Max Frisch called Switzerland a ‘nation without a vision’, and the slogan of the Swiss Pavilion at the World Fair in Seville in 1992 was ‘Switzerland does not exist.’ In a way, Switzerland had no ‘real’ history – be it triumphant or traumatic – to represent. Since the end of the war, the Swiss believed that their place was outside of history – or even, that history did not exist at all, that it was not real. History, to the Swiss, was a matter for others. The only thing that was ‘real’ but, in an odd way, invisible and timeless, was money. This myth was shaken in the mid-1990s when the opening of the wartime archives in Germany and the United States revealed evidence about Switzerland’s involvement in financial transactions during the war. The fact that the German Reichsbank had not only dealt with Switzerland, but that it had even sent large amounts of gold to Swiss banks – possibly including gold from the teeth of victims of the Holocaust – revealed that Switzerland had never really been neutral, and that its gold was not ‘pure’ at all. The still-ongoing, highly emotional, discussion of these issues makes it clear that bank secrecy was and is at the core of Switzerland’s national identity.

Back to Bill. How can the absence of ‘real’ history, the Swiss identification with money and Bill’s success as a sculptor of public monuments be correlated? The American literary historian Walter Benn Michaels has demonstrated the complex relationship between the logic of money, naturalism and modernism. In his groundbreaking article of 1987, ‘The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism’, he deals with the inter-relatedness of American trompe l’oeil painting of the late nineteenth century and contemporary discussion about the Gold Standard. According to Michaels, the so-called goldbugs, opposing the government’s monetary policy, wanted to limit the amount of circulating money by maintaining a gold standard. In other words, they considered gold – and money – as natural, thus limited, resources. Paper money, in the view of the goldbugs, was nothing more than fraudulent. In collecting trompe l’oeil paintings representing paper money, bank cheques, stamps, photographs and other presumably fake objects, the goldbugs reaffirmed their suspicion that money was not real. The goldbug’s aesthetic enjoyment of disclosing the mechanism of deception in a trompe l’oeil painting is, according to Michaels,
comparable to the enjoyment by a modernist spectator of disclosing the fact that the ‘essence’ of painting is nothing but ‘flat’ colour on a tangible support. Modernist criteria of value such as essence, abstraction and self-referentiality are, according to Michaels, related to the logic of naturalism. Whereas the goldbug feasts on the disappearance of gold the modernist fears the disappearance of art. This is obviously the case of Bill who says in his essay ‘Art as non-changeable fact’ (see Documents, 14), in 1968:

It is the scope of art to create a kind of non-changeable, elementary truth. A kind of truth which can be interpreted differently but which remains nevertheless the same. Though the environment and the onlooker are subject to change, this does not go for the aesthetic object. 17

Bill’s validation of Concrete Art over abstraction can be explained in this context. For him, concrete art, that is, ‘works of art which are created according to a technique and laws which are entirely appropriate to them’, 18 enhances the intrinsic qualities of the material of which it is made. His sculptures tell the story of authenticity, concretization and essence, of the rawness of natural matter being tamed by order and structure. In his words: “[Concrete art] is real and intellectual, a-naturalist while being close to nature.” 19

Furthermore, as Michaels puts it, the logic of naturalism is related to the economy of wasting and saving. Bill – as well as Jean Tinguely, the other highly popular Swiss artist in the 1960s and 1970s – obviously fits into this economy. The sculptures of Tinguely, such as his seminal Homage to New York: A Self-construing and Self-destroying Work of Art, 1960, tell – over and over again – the story of art dismantling and reassembling itself, of art disappearing and reappearing (see Documents, 15). Bill’s complex forms as well play endlessly between two- and three-dimensionality. Because of the mirroring effects of their polished surfaces they seem to dissolve into their environment. But the spectator always already knows that they will remain stable. The spectator’s pleasure results from the fact that the trompe l’œil play of illusion/dis-illusion can be endlessly repeated on safe ground. As Bill puts it in ‘Art as Non-changeable Fact’:

The understanding that it is possible to make new machines out of old useless ones, which have no other purpose but to move and to present familiar things to a new audience, is equally not so new.

The understanding that fireworks, water displays, light and shadow projections can be created and purposefully planned, reaches back to antiquity and has not yet been replaced by something better and more impressive. 20

The mechanism of trompe l’œil is a leitmotiv throughout Bill’s sculptural œuvre. Based on a mathematical formula, Continuity represents a belief in eternal values, in unchanging, stable laws which simultaneously contain and control the rawness of natural forces. The base of the sculpture is made of naturally smoothed boulders which, as Bill insists, were transported to

the site during the Ice Age by Alpine glaciers. Continuity refers to an earlier project, the Endless Ribbon, which Bill designed as a kind of Möbius strip at the request of Marcel Breuer for the ‘Industrial Art’ exhibition in London in 1935. Breuer wanted a decoration for the fireplace in his project and Bill proposed to suspend the endless ribbon, with the title Relief/Indulating Surface, in such a manner as to suggest that a real fire was burning (see Figure 12.8). 21
In the event this work was not shown in London but Bill presented it at the Milan Triennale in 1936. Furthermore, he exhibited a copy of the sculpture in his own garden, placed, again, on a bed of boulders.

For Expo 64 in Lausanne Bill planned a so-called ‘Court of the Arts’ with twenty sculptures by Swiss artists, all placed on identical bases and all made from the same material, namely gold-plated aluminium (see Figure 12.9). Bill was aware of potential criticisms from his colleagues and he promised he would do whatever he could to achieve an ‘execution as beautiful as if the works of art were made of pure gold’.  

In the late 1970s, the Union Bank of Switzerland selected Bill when it decided to commemorate its own birthday with a gift to the people of Zurich. Bill’s Pavilion Sculpture, 1979–83, was intended to function as a work of art to walk through, as a part of public space. However, the gift never became really popular. It might be symptomatic of the variety of publics which Bill’s work addresses that the best view of the ‘house without a
11 Carola Giedion-Welcker, ‘On sculpture and public life’, 1955

Large outdoor exhibitions and the inclusion of sculpture into architecture have linked sculpture to public life... The situation of sculpture has improved and it takes a more and more prominent position among the arts. One could almost assume that an ‘age of sculpture’ is approaching, hand in hand with the growing demand for the decoration of public life...


12 Max Bill, ‘A monument’, 1952

Note: These comments by Max Bill about his project for A Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner were submitted to the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, in 1952.

... Should a memorial really be erected to this anonymous political fellow traveller of some oppugnant tendency...?

My answer was negative. I came to the conclusion that the sponsor’s intention had not been to erect a monument to this anonymous suffering, particularly since it was obvious that an opponent of a dictatorial regime had been meant.

Therefore, it seemed to me that a different theme had been implied if not clearly expressed. This theme I defined as ‘an honesty of attitude and faithfulness to the awareness of having a free choice on one’s own responsibility regarding the way to be taken’...

It was to this unknown, upright human being, intrinsically free and aware of his responsibility that a monument was to be erected; and for this attitude it was to be the symbol.

This deliberation gave rise to a solution wherein idea and form were identical, and of which I can personally show each detail to be indispensable and deliberate.

The monument consists of a group of three cubes which appear from without as constituting a closed entity. At their center stands a triangular steel column...

The objection was raised that my project was not sculpture, but architecture. Sculpture and architecture have a common characteristic, namely the composition of space. The case we are discussing is actually a borderline case, in which spatial development, in the plastic sense, is achieved by the use of architectonic means. In contrast to traditional sculpture, which generally represents an image placed into an outlying space (and this is also true of ‘modern sculpture’), it has been the primary intention here to compose an inner space as plastic, whereby the inner space leads to the outer. In this sense, this monument is an example of the ‘de-composition’ of the concepts of sculpture and architecture, as also of the concept of ‘painting,’ which is evident here in the variously colored materials. The result is a composite work, a synthesis of sculpture-architecture-painting...

Certain critics maintain that we have now finally freed art from the encumbering ideas and that the new art is an ‘art of pure relationships,’ as Mondrian would have it. However, concrete art is the visible form of an idea, it provides an abstract concept with a concrete form. We believe that Concrete Art can help to express precisely those values which are not
roof,” as Bill himself liked to call the sculpture, is the view from the donor’s window. On the inauguration of his sculpture, the speaker observed that, ‘typically for Bill’, he polished the edges of the granite slabs to allow people’s hands to touch the pieces without getting cut and to prevent playing children from getting hurt. Did she unconsciously remember the Swiss bank’s graphic design at the Schweizerische Landesausstellung of 1939 which showed an open hand under the title ‘The Banks-Helping-the-Public Hand’?

In the early 1980s, the board of the Deutsche Bank invited Bill to re-create his Continuity in order to ornament their new twin-tower headquarters in Frankfurt. Bill had originally proposed to design a new sculpture. However, the board preferred an enlarged realization of Continuity. Typically for an art which follows ‘intrinsic laws’, the actual size of the original model could easily be modified and the sculpture was now built in monolithic granite weighing over fifty tons. Like a ‘perpetuum mobile the sculpture motivates our seeing and understanding’, Werner Spies wrote in a book published by the Deutsche Bank. The book contains dozens of photographs showing the process of production and refinement of the sculpture. The photographs can be read as an illustration of the gnomes’ enjoyment in following the excavation and transformation of resources. Underlined by Bill’s commentary, the photographs document the three-year process of recovering the raw granite in a quarry in Sardinia, sculpting the work in Carrara in an ‘almost invisible, secret’ place (see Figure 12.10) and then shipping the fifty-ton treasure – mostly by night – home to Frankfurt, where the sculpture was placed in front of the bank’s twin towers (see Figures 12.11 and 12.12). As a concluding remark Bill wrote:

Now, ‘continuity’, this symbol, stands in the centre of Frankfurt. May it be a sign of eternal continuity – without quotation marks – for everybody. A sign, that collaboration, perseverance, spiritual creation, skilled handicraft and invention taken together may achieve results of stable value for everybody.
favourite stories: the story of controlled growth; the story of the ennoblement of the raw and irrational nature of money; and the story that money, like art, is a non-changeable fact, always threatening to disappear but never really disappearing.

Notes

1. Due to the federal structure of Switzerland, cultural affairs remain largely in the hands of the 26 cantons. There is no federal ministry of culture. A paragraph on cultural policy was added to the federal constitution only in January 2000. The Swiss Federal Art Commission, based on a law of 1893, is responsible for commissions for architecture-related monuments. See Bundesamt für Kulturbetrag (ed.), Der Bund fördert, der Bund sammelt: 100 Jahre Kulturförderung des Bundes, Baden: Lars Müller, 1988.


6. Bill was a member of the legislature of the City Council, Zurich from 1961 to 1968. From 1961 to 1968 he was a member of the Swiss Federal Art Commission. From 1967 to 1971 he was a member of the Swiss Parliament for the liberal party Landesring der Unabhängigen.


8. Bill had just published the booklet Windrauschu, Zurich: Verlag für Architektur, 1946.

9. See also M. Bill, Robert Maillart, Brücken und Konstruktionen, Zurich: Verlag für Architektur, 1949.


12. Quoted in Ockman, 1993, pp. 162.


encumbered by literary or sentimental connotations, thus, we attempt to create works with a direct, unequivocal symbolic force, such as symbols for unity, eternity, liberty, human dignity. My project attempted to contribute to this development, at the same time demonstrating that art of ideas and Concrete Art are not inherently contradictory.


13 Max Bill, ‘Concrete Art’, 1936/49

Note: The first version of the text was published in the exhibition catalogue Zeitprobleme in der Schweizer Malerei und Plastik, 1936; a revised version was published in the catalogue Zürcher Konkrete Kunst for the exhibition which toured Germany in 1949.

We call ‘Concrete Art’ works of art which are created according to a technique and laws which are entirely appropriate to them, without taking external support from experimental nature or from its transformation, is to say, without the intervention of a process of abstraction. Concrete Art is autonomous in its specificity. It is the expression of the human spirit, destined for the human spirit, and should possess that clarity and that perfection which one expects from works of the human spirit.

It is by means of concrete painting and sculpture that those achievements which permit visual perception materialize. The instruments of this realization are colour, space, light, movement. In giving form to these elements, one creates new realities. Abstract ideas which previously existed only in the mind are made visible in a concrete form.

Concrete Art, when it is true to itself, is the pure expression of harmonious measure and law. It organizes systems and gives life to these arrangements, through the means of art. It is real and intellectual, an artist, while being close to nature. It tends toward the universal and yet cultivates the unique, it rejects individuality, but for the benefit of the individual.


14 Max Bill, ‘Art as non-changeable fact’, 1967

Note: This text was first published in A. Hill, Data-Direction in Art, Theory and Aesthetics, London: Faber and Faber, 1968.

It has always been said by avantgardists – the constructivists, the dadaists, the kinetic artists and the pop and op-artists – everything changes, everything is life, everything is in motion. Using such arguments a new state of being has been proclaimed for the fine arts. More exactly, new states of being – the changeable work ... I want to find out what in this context is mere fashion, what is an error, and what might be right.

The understanding that everything moves is nothing new ... The understanding that it is possible to make new machines out of old useless ones, which have no other purpose but to move and present familiar things to a new audience, is equally not so new.

The understanding that fireworks, water displays, light and shadow projections can be created and purposefully planned, reaches back to antiquity and has not yet been replaced by something better and more impressive.

All this has been known for a long time. Why had it to be proclaimed again ...

I say that it is the scope of art to create a kind of non-changeable, elementary truth. A kind of truth which can be interpreted differently but which remains nevertheless the same.

Though the environment and the onlooker are subject to change, this does not go for the aesthetic object ...

In the end: what is the use of all those aspirations of kinetics? Art should remain the serene play it has always been! The kinetic artists belong to the domain of jugglers, conjurers, the circus and the fairground. We find pleasure in their friendly and funny ways, their mischief and their tricks. But one should not see more than there really is: entertainment. This, however, has never been the idea of art and (fortunately) will never be.


15 Jean Tinguely, ‘Untitled statement’, 1961

Note: This text was first published in ZERO, no. 3, 1961.

Static, static, static! Be static! Movement is static!
Movement is static because it is the only immutable thing — the only certainty, the only thing that is unchangeable. The only certainty is that movement, change, and metamorphosis exist. That is why movement is static. So-called immobile objects exist only in movement. Immobile, certain, and permanent things, ideas, works and beliefs change, transform and disintegrate. Immobile objects are snapshots of a movement whose existence we refuse to accept, because we ourselves are only an instant in the great movement. Movement is the only static, final, permanent, and certain thing. Static means transformation. Let us be static together with movement. Move statically! Be static! Be movement! Believe in movement's static quality. Believe in change. Do not hold onto anything. Change. Do not pinpoint anything! Everything about us is movement. Everything around us is change. Believe in the movement's static quality. Be static!

The constant of movement, of disintegration, of change, and of construction is static. Be constant! Get used to seeing things, ideas, and works in their state of ceaseless change. You will live longer. Be permanent by being static! Be part of movement! Only in movement do we find the true essence of things. Today we can no longer believe in permanent laws, defined religions, durable architecture, or eternal kingdoms. Immutability does not exist. All is movement. All is static. We are afraid of movement because it stands for decomposition — because we see our disintegration in movement. Continuous static movement marches on! It cannot be stopped. We are fooling ourselves if we close our eyes and refuse to recognize the change. Actually, decomposition begins only when we try to prevent it. Decomposition does not exist! Decomposition is a state envisaged only by us, because we do not want it to exist, and because we dread it.

There is no death! Death exists only for those who cannot accept evolution. Everything changes. Death is a transition from movement to movement. Death is static. Death is movement. Death is movement ... We are still very much annoyed by out-of-date notions in time. Please, would you throw away your watches! At least toss aside minutes and hours ...

To attempt to hold fast an instant is doubtful.
To bind an emotion is unthinkable.
To petrify love is impossible.
It is beautiful to be transitory.
How lovely it is not to have to live forever.
Luckily, there is nothing good and nothing evil.
Live in time, with time — and as soon as time has dribbled away, against it. Do not try to retain it. Do not build dams to restrain it. Water can be stored. It flows through your fingers. But time you cannot hold back. Time is movement and cannot be checked. Time passes us and rushes on, and we remain behind, old and crumbled. But we are rejuvenated again and again by static and continuous movement. Let us be transformed! Let us be static! Let us be against stagnation and for static!