



# ANTONIO SANT'ELIA:

## DOES HE REALLY BELIEVE HIS OWN WORDS!?

RESPONSE MANIFESTO TO ANTONIO SANTELIA'S "MANIFESTO OF FUTURIST ARCHITECTURE"

<http://www.unknown.nu/futurism/architecture.html>

by Ross Hennigan (IDEAS – ARC09201A), MARCH 8, 2011. Word Count: 1855

When he passed away at the beginning of the 20th Century after just under 3 decades of life (<http://www.nytimes.com>, March 9, 2011), he left a legacy, he left us his work and his unique vision to remember him by, but at the same time, he left behind some words that got at least one reader intrigued. As a fellow keen architectural designer analysing the words of another, one cannot feel a little perplexed and stunned at the rather conflicting hypocritical words that were written.

1700

1800

1900

Antonio Sant'Elia. Was he influential? **Yes.**

Was he respected? **Yes.**

Did his work inspire us? **Yes.**

Can we believe in his idea of a Star Wars-esque futuristic metropolis, which he showed us in sketch after sketch? **Yes.**

Can he influence the people to believe the words he says? **Yes.**

Yet, does he believe all of his own words?

**No!**

Architecture is defined by the people and for the people. The way we think and design is manipulated by the way we, as

human beings, live, have lived and will live in the future. We must design parallel with the environment around us. Life is a song. The people around us are the harmony and we are the rhythm. We cannot change without the harmony for the song will soon be broken and meaningless. This world'll become unordered and forced into an era of

chaos. It is foolish to predict what the people around us want. We are a family united by our race into the future. In order to move into the future and thus build and design accordingly and ergonomically, we must listen to what the people need and not tell them what they should live. Also, architecture is just about what the people require. It is also about what the people want. The idea that "the decorative must be abolished" (<http://www.unknown.nu>, March 9, 2011) would be seen as abhorrent by the

diverse cultures. It is decoration that defines the people. The tattoo was what the Ainu the animists that they were now public. The feathers dress were the American what they were. is what gives cultures their identity. By decorative, he's sentencing people to show their own separate character to death. Individuality is what makes the world interesting. If everybody was the same, this world would become one seriously tedious and dreary place to live in.

1700  
So-called death of Architecture

ERA OF NO ARCHITECTURE BEGINS

1888  
Birth of Sant'Elia

1916  
Death of Sant'Elia

If no architecture has existed since 1700, he, who was born almost 200 years later, whether he realises it or not, implies that any architect born after the 1700s could not pass off any of their work they have toiled and sweated over as architecture. What is concluded by the statement is that not even his own creations and ideas can be classed as architecture. Doesn't that defeat the purpose of being an architect? After all, an architect, like any designer, sets out on the road to prove what they're worth through the art that they create. Every architect is out to prove why their idea's merit surpasses any others. To say that no architecture has existed since 1700 implies that he is venturing down a road to nowhere, a road which has no destination. It is a true shame that he couldn't see the marvels that are being created today, for Mario Cucinella, an architect that shares the Italian blood of Sant'Elia, is a genius that has implemented sustainability into the designs of his buildings. He is, like many others are in today's society, coming up with ways we can save our planet from being destroyed from effects such as global warming. Working alongside the government of the country of the biggest contributor to these detrimental effects, he is helping them to reduce China's Sasquatch-sized Carbon footprint (<http://www.arch-times.com>, March 9, 2011). Sant'Elia says, "Architecture as the art of arranging forms according to pre-established criteria is finished" (<http://www.unknown.nu>, March 9, 2011). Yet, is it, really? Modern 20th Century architects, such as himself, are influenced by the phrase as coined by Louis Sullivan "Form Follows Function" (<http://www.articleworld.org>, March 9, 2011). Sullivan, an American. That's right, Sant'Elia was inspired the works of architecture from the land of Stars and Stripes (<http://www.worldlingo.com>, March 9, 2011). It was this phrase that made architecture (or buildings that don't deserve to be classed as architecture in his opinion) of his time what it was. The definition of this phrase implies that the function of the design is a higher priority than that of the form, of the final shape of the end product. After all, what good is a product that has although a sexy stunning shape when it doesn't fulfil its purpose? All things in life need to have a purpose. Otherwise, there will be no reason for it to exist. The function is the pre-established criteria that Sant'Elia, a non-practitioner of what he preaches, speaks of. Thus, if the art of arranging forms according to pre-established criteria really is finished, then our world as we know it today would be lost. We would inhabit a land where our buildings and structures that we spend so much time and money and effort on are unusable.

So unfair are the words that are spoken about the academies and their apprentices who according to the Italian controversial grapevine are recklessly ejaculating copied ideas from the great predecessors before them (<http://www.unknown.nu>, March 9, 2011). As one of those young apprentices, one implores the debator to be tolerable towards the new training inexperienced youth. We are only young and lacking the knowledge and experience that is required. We are at this moment of time only just being introduced into the world of architecture. As Sant'Elia knows after being an apprentice himself, this form of art and science can be described as broad, complex, comprehensive and more importantly a form that will never have any limit to its possibilities and outcomes. Architecture can be seen as a world of endless water, since it has no defined depth and there so much to be discovered. For our inexperience, we are timid and unsure of where we must begin to learn about what is to be discovered. Like in life itself, we need to be shown the way by those who are elder and experienced in this world, in the way that an apprentice that learns from a master, in the way that a son learns from a father and a daughter learns from a mother. We need help from the icons and legends that can inspire us. It was never our intention to recopy the classic models. Why would we choose to do so? Architects always compete to make their own names known. If we were to recopy, all that we would prove is that we are clones, unnecessary and meaningless copies. Wouldn't that be a waste of life? As humans, we are designed to make our own statements in the time that is given to us. When we die, we would wish to leave this world knowing we had lived life to the full. Is there such life that is spent living in the shadow of another? Would we want to live that life? There is so much to be learnt, so much to be explored. Architecture in itself is its own world, a world that can defy what is considered to be normal and even unworkable. People can spend a lifetime in this world and still never get a full understanding of what it's all about and the same can be said about the debator, for architecture is not a dogmatic and narrow art of how buildings should look like or how they are made. It is so much more than he realises. We, as apprentices, are young, but so was he.

He says he despises durable materials in building construction (<http://www.unknown.nu>, March 9, 2011). Don't buildings have to be durable to withstand the undefiable effects of the weather? Don't architects have to consider the potential life span of a building? Or is it his intention that we should constantly be changing the way our environment looks. As humans, we only live once. We should use the limited time that's given to us to experience the works, art and culture of others instead of constantly replacing our own. Buildings cannot become architectural statements until they have proved they can stand for a reasonable amount of time. When he speaks of despising durable materials, he admits that he

despises materials like concrete, steel and glass that he uses in the work of his own (<http://www.unknown.nu>, March 9, 2011).

Yes, we are moving forwards into the future, but as humans, we cannot ever forget who we are or where it is that we came from. We cannot forget all of our history or those who have made it for us. Therefore, let us still embalm, reconstruct and reproduce the ancient monuments and palace that have stood and made our history. We cannot tear down the historical landmarks that people have grown to love. We must not leave our past behind. We must allow it to strengthen us and inspire us into the future.



Is a coating of Egyptian, Indian or Byzantine really a sign of disrespect or is it an establishment of a subliminal connection between the three distinctive nations, thus a sign of love? What is a world where every nation does not share or collaborate with one another? We share this planet and together we must work to make it a better place to exist in. By coming together and collaborating our ideas and our theories, we can truly show that we are one true happy family, the way it should be. A family that doesn't argue, a family that doesn't kill one another, but most importantly, a family that is united by the common interest of existing in a place full of aesthetic wonders born from our creative minds in the form of architecture.

Antonio Sant'Elia, every human being has a right to an opinion, but one opinion alone cannot change the world, especially if it implies a unification of a certain way of life. There really is no absolute victory for Futurism, even if the literature of words-of freedom and the art of noises allegedly affirm it. The peoples of the world are different, thus everybody's opinions of what is dynamic will vary. Some may agree and some may not. It is now up to the people of the world to embrace the words that are spoken, but the message that one purveys to any upcoming debators is that they must learn to be careful of writing words that may turn around on you and cause a great deal of humiliation.

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