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Article

From the "Principle of Dressing" to the "Law of Dressing": The contentious relation between Gottfried Semper and Adolf Loos

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ABSTRACT

Two architects—Gottfried Semper in Altona, in 1834, and Adolf Loos in Vienna, in 1897—started a radical battle against the prevalent order of the theory and practice of fine art and architecture. This paper aims to discuss the theoretical approaches and practical conditions which generated both Semper's and Loos' critical positions and to rethink the correlation of their ideas (i.e. Semper's principle of dressing and Loos' interpretation of Semper's principle)—both in terms of agreement and conflict. To illuminate the contentious nature of this correlation, first, two key methodological approaches in Semper's thinking—primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] and relational analysis—and Loos' dualistic stance towards these approaches will be examined. Second, the act of dressing will be discussed as a reconciliation in which the contention between Semper's and Loos' thinking is resolved on two levels: The theoretical contention between relational analysis and primordial history, and the practical contention between the subject and the material. The analysis is based on Semper's two treatises which are the 1851 treatise *The Four Elements of Architecture* and the 1861 treatise *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics: A Handbook for Technicians, Artists, and the Patrons of Art* translated by Mallgrave and Hermann, and on three articles written by Adolf Loos, "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung" [The Principle of Dressing] and "Glas und Ton" [Glass and Clay] published in 1898 and "Architektur" [Architecture] published in 1909.

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INTRODUCTION

Having received extensive criticism from August Schmarsow (1893) and Peter Behrens (Behrens, 1910), Semper's principle of *dressing* [*Bekleidung*] and *spatial enclosure* rather found its most remarkable realization in the works and writings of three architects: Otto Wagner, Hendrik Berlage and Adolf Loos. Semper's criticism of architecture not only provided them with an exemplary retort against the "dead categories" in both arts and philosophy, but more importantly with the primordial conditions [*Urzustände*] of modern architecture allowing them to generate their own positions within the crisis of architecture.

[1] At the risk of falling into the same error that I criticize, I see myself forced to go back to the primitive conditions (*Urzustände*) of human society in order to come to that which I actually propose to set forth" (Semper, 1851, p. 102).

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Compared to Wagner and Berlage, Loos' stance on Semper's principle of dressing is the most ambitious. Loos could challenge Semper's principle into a "law of dressing" [*ein Gesetz der Bekleidung*] as a guideline for architects how to avoid imitation in practice and how to achieve truth while dressing materials. Loos' adaptation of Semper's principle of dressing, however, did not imply that he completely agreed with Semper. Two articles written by Loos in 1898—"Glas und Ton" and "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung"— explicitly draw on Semper's ideas from the 1861 treatise, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten oder praktische Äesthetik: Ein Handbuch für Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreude*, but also make clear Loos' *conditional* reception of the practical application of these ideas.

The relation between Semper's and Loos' theoretical thinking has been widely discussed in recent studies, which rely on Loos' two articles to claim a connection between Semper's principle of dressing and Loos' concept of *Raumplan*. None of these studies, however, addresses the contentious nature of this relation in general and Loos' conditional acceptance of the principle of dressing. Rykwert's study is an exception: Rykwert (1998, p. 21) discusses Loos' "ambiguous attitude to Semper" with regard to historicism, and brings out one remarkable detail about the contentious nature of their relation apropos Semper's contribution to the *Ringstraßenarchitektur* of Vienna in the last years of his life. Semper, in collaboration with Carl von Hasenauer, was the architect of the Art History Museum (1869-1891) and the Hofburg Theater (1871-1888) during Vienna's so-called *Ringstraße* era. In his article "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung," Loos (1898c) describes this period as "a sorrowful era for art" and explicitly condemns its architects en masse without mentioning Semper's or any others by name. What Rkywert overlooks in his discussion, however, is that the contention between Semper and Loos was not only limited to historicism but also pertained specifically to the principle of dressing.

My purpose in this paper is to revisit the theoretical and practical conditions which generated both Semper's and Loos' critical positions to their own times and to rethink the correlation of their ideas (i.e. Semper's principle of dressing and Loos' interpretation of Semper's principle of dressing)—both in terms of agreement and conflict. Moreover, this correlation must be seen as a process of transformation—moving from the principle of dressing to the law of dressing—rather than as a matter of fact in itself.

To illuminate the contentious nature of this correlation, I will first examine two key methodological approaches in Semper's thinking—primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] and relational analysis—and explore Loos' dualistic stance towards these approaches. Second, I will re-examine the act of dressing as a reconciliation in which the contention between Semper's and Loos' thinking is resolved on two levels: The theoretical contention between relational analysis and primordial history, and also the practical contention between the subject and the material.

In addition to some notes on secondary literature, this study is primarily an analysis of the following original texts: The 1851 treatise *The Four Elements of Architecture* and the 1861 treatise *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics: A Handbook for Technicians, Artists, and the Patrons of Art* both by Gottfried Semper (as translated by Mallgrave and Hermann), the 1898 articles "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung" and "Glas und Ton" by Adolf Loos, as well as his 1909 article, "Architektur."

URGESCHICHTE: AS A GUIDE TO THE TRUTH OF PRACTICAL AESTHETICS

The writings of both Semper and Loos express their awareness of contemporary polemics and the respective crises in the fine arts and architecture out of which they developed their own theories, as mere criticisms of their times. In other words, their theories were not simply aphorisms or abstractions, but parries directed to specific scholars or practitioners: Agents of real conflicts in the fine arts and architecture.

Semper's first treatise *The Four Elements of Architecture* (1851) focused on the genealogical history of architecture [*Urgeschichte*] by attacking the approach of contemporary scholars in the theory of art—i.e. in the Academia. The second treatise *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts or Practical Aesthetics: A Handbook for Technicians, Artists, and the Patrons of Art* (1861), on the other hand, shifted its direction from theory to practice, from to the academy of arts to "the art industry"—in Semper's words—and finally from the scholars of art to the producers of art—i.e. technicians, artists and patrons of art, as it is clear from the subtitle title.

The decay of ethics in architectural practice is at the center of Loos' criticisms, which illustrate how the natural truth to materiality in the work of craftsmen was degenerated by architects into imitation, forgery and ungracious dressing of construction with redundant ornamentation. Indeed, imitation was the main subject of his article "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung," in which Loos (1898c) sharply attacked both the Viennese architects of the *Ringstraße* era and those of his own time who executed their profession in the name of *art of building*, but thereby lost the *essence of building* (pp. 140-141).

In response to the degeneration of art and aesthetics in everyday life, both authors returned to societies other than their own—Semper to the ancients and Loos to English and the Americans—in the search of truth in the act of making.

[2] Loos, 1898c, p. 140. "…eine traurige zeit für die kunst…"

The reason Semper sought to dissect the habits and techniques of production in everyday life in ancient time was to extrapolate a model—both theoretical and practical—for the present. The crisis within fine arts and architecture forced him to take lessons from "the wealth of information on ancient conditions" (Semper, 1851, p. 107) for contemporary use. For Semper (1861), the source of truth did not exist in the abstract propositions of Greek philosophy, but in the material reality and practical aesthetics of Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian and Chinese cultures (p. 233).

Before defining his four new elements of architecture in his book, Semper confronts recent theories of art and proposes a return to the very origins of history—the primordial history [*Urgeschichte*]:

> At the risk of falling into the same error that I criticize, I see myself forced to go back to the primitive conditions [*Urzustände*] of human society in order to come to that which I actually propose to set forth. (Semper, 1851, p. 102)

Thus, Semper's theoretical approach is to write a primordial history of architecture, looking at ancient cultures in Assyria, Persia, Egypt and Greece not only to explore how they were building, but how they were combining arts and techniques of construction with those of handicrafts such as wickerwork, painting, needlework and others while creating and producing their everyday objects.

In the two articles written by Loos, "Glas und Ton" (1898b) and "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung" (1898c), Loos' thinking on the distortion of meaning within the theory and practice of art and architecture is analogous to Semper's understanding of primordial history. In "Glas und Ton," Loos makes extensive reference to Semper's study of ancient household utensils from the section on ceramics in the book *The Style*. Remarkably, this is the only article where Loos (1989b) directly quotes from Semper the detailed explanation of how the difference between an Egyptian *situla* and a Greek *hydria* does not depend on formalistic codes—as it was claimed and taught by the academy of fine arts—but on practical and cultural ones. The form of a pail, Semper illustrates, is primarily derived from the relation of the artifact to the women who carry it on their heads and to the source of water—i.e., a river, a spring or a fountain.

Semper's comprehension of primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] as a way of decoding not only genealogical properties of household objects or commodities, but their power of manifestation [*Offenbarungskraft*] to inform on the traditions of the nation or the character of the topography and cultural habits, as well, fascinated Loos. Adding to Semper, Loos (1898b) claimed that this power of manifestation is not only embedded in pots but in every material commodity (p. 89).

For Loos, the primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] of architecture is connected to the principle of dressing. In his article "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung," Loos (1898c) proclaims that cover [*Decke*] is the primordial architectural detail—i.e., the primordial form of architecture—made of a pelt or a woven textile. The idea of dressing and the need for enclosure emerged first, and then the need for a constructional framework and walls behind the cover. Loos (1898c) finds this sequential evolution of needs fundamental for the development of the idea of building, which is moreover a universal process experienced by all human beings in the same sequence (p. 139). It is also this process within which Loos notices the transformation of the use of the carpet as a primordial form of spatial enclosure in its truest sense in ancient architecture into an imitation of dressing in contemporary architecture.

According to Semper (1861), the transformation of materials happens through artistic motives and technical treatments within the course of history. Within the process of this "metamorphosis," neither the artistic motive nor the primordial type [*Urtypus*] remains the same. They both go through "a new material transformation" [*Stoffwechsel*] the multiple phases of which are recorded as a genealogical memory on the ultimate form of the *Urtypus* (pp. 258-259). In that sense, only a search for the primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] of both everyday and monumental materials would purify architectural history of its chauvinism and barbarism to ancient arts, restore the overlooked relationships among the various arts including architecture, sculpture and textile, and finally, bring their appreciation in ancient times back to the present (pp. 260-261).

Here, at a glance, the notion of "metamorphosis" as well as the primordial type [*Urtypus*] in Semper's use recalls Goethe's notion of the primordial plant [*Urpflanze*]. Malgrave (1996) notes that, with the primordial plant, Goethe wanted to identify "the oldest, archetypal plant species from which all other plants evolved" who made an extensive use of primordial forms [*Urformen*], primordial shapes [*Urbilden*] and primordial phenomona [*Urphänomene*] in his scientific and poetic writings after 1790 (p. 158). Goethe's concepts were well-known to Semper who used them in his London lecture in 1853 along with the evolutionary concepts of Georges Cuvier and Alexander von Humboldt (Mallgrave, 1989, p. 30). As early as 1848, in a manuscript of a lecture, Semper put forward two forms as the primordial forms [*Urformen*] of architectural creation: First, the "vertical enclosure" [*Umfriedigung*] which was a wall motif used as a spatial boundary for security against enemies in the courtyards of the southern climate; and second, the "gabled roof" which was a commonly used motif in the huts of the northern climate (Mallgrave, 1996, p. 163).

[3] In his writings, Semper (1861) uses this term not in "The Four Elements," but in "The Style": "Presently, we shall discuss the predilection of the Chinese and the Indians for wickerwork and its importance for the primordial history (*Urgeschichte*) of architecture and style." [Semper's italics], (p.

It is remarkable to recall here that Goethe's concept of the primordial phenomenon [*Urphänomen*] was also borrowed by Walter Benjamin in his *Passagenwerk*, where he wrote the primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] of modernity by looking at moments of the nineteenth century Paris as "ur-forms of the present" (Buck-Morss, 1991, p. 77). In 1918, Benjamin argued "what Goethe called ur-phenomona were not symbols in the sense of poetic analogies, but, rather, 'ideal symbols' in which the ideal essences of which Plato spoke appeared in sensual forms" (Buck-Morss, 1991, p. 71).

In *Passagenwerk*, for Benjamin, the architectural primordial type of the nineteenth century Paris was "the arcade" built out of iron- and glasswork. If for Semper, the "vertical enclosure" and the "gabled roof" were two primordial forms of architectural creation, then for Benjamin, the "iron gate" of the arcade was the "vertical enclosure" to secure the goods in the shops in the evenings, and the "glass roof" of the arcade the "gabled roof" to let the daylight, but not rain, flow through the whole arcade. While Benjamin was working on *Passagenwerk* from 1927 to 1940, however, the glory days of the Paris arcades in the nineteenth century were in the past: most of the arcades were in poor shape and did not survive the economic decline of the late 1920s, neither economically in terms of the type of small shops they contained nor structurally in terms of the primordial forms of architecture.

This dialectical juxtaposition of the primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] and the present quietly incarnates both Semper and Loos in Benjamin's work: Semper through his genealogical approach to the world of artifacts and Loos through his dialectical thinking of modernity. By questioning imitation and tastelessness in modern living of his time, Loos captured symbolic contradictions of the material transformation within the primordial history of architecture in two artifacts (to which he came via Semper's understanding of practical aesthetics and the principle of dressing): The ceramics/the pail and the textile/the carpet. Thus, what Loos illustrates to his readers in 1898 is the encapsulation of the material transformation by the symbolic one—in other words, the encapsulation of the practical by the beautiful, of truth by imitation and of dressing by decorating. This was the crucial decline of architecture that urged Loos to look at the primordial phenomena of the present—as Benjamin was to do—and to capture moments of modern living in a revolutionary way he never actually named—the *Urgeschichte* of modernity.

RELATIONAL ANALYSIS AS A GUIDE TO A GENEALOGY OF ARCHITECTURE

In his critique of Franz Kugler's arguments on polychrome architecture, Semper (1851) puts emphasis on the decontextualization and the sublimation of works of art with reference to Kugler's book entitled *On the Polychromy of Greek Architecture and Sculpture and Its Limits*. Although the Greek temple had always been "a part of a greater whole for which it was the center of relations," in academia it was taken out of its context with a total disregard of relations between various materials and their meanings (p. 89). Here, Semper (1861) brings out a particular stress on *relations* for the first time and puts architecture as well as his theory "in the center of relations" (p. 203). Thus, according to Semper, the substance of architecture is not concealed in the material creations themselves—i.e., buildings—but in the relations between arts, objects and techniques, and further, in the relations between concepts and laws, as well.

Although Semper's relational thinking is at the center of his theories, none of the recent studies on Semper gives much attention to the analysis of this aspect. The common emphasis, instead, is generally put on the relation between ethnography and architecture rather than specifically Semper's relational thinking. In his challenging study of the tectonic, Frampton (1995) is no exception in this regard. He argues that, as a response to the degeneration of his time, Semper reappraised "the ethnographic origins of the various manufacturing procedures, together with their material references and corresponding forms" (p. 87). But following this point, he does not call attention to Semper's fundamental belief on relational thinking.

In his study of Semper, Mallgrave (1996) emphasizes Semper's theoretical affinity towards anthropology and his awareness of archeological findings resulting from the significant unearthing of Assyrian cities during the 1840s (pp. 161-163). Yet, he pays scant attention to the "genealogical link" observed by Semper (1851) between societies and their influences on each other—including building practices and types (p. 121).

Before positing his four new elements of architecture, to oppose Vitruvius' elements of architecture—the *hearth*, the *roof*, the *enclosure* and the *mound*/the *terrace*—Semper (1851) starts the section "The Four Elements" with the following: "Hellenic culture could only have arisen on the humus of many past traditions long since dead and decayed and from alien motives brought over from without and no longer intelligible in their original meaning" (p. 101).

Semper (1851) did not view Hellenic culture "out of context" (p. 102), just as he would refuse to view the Greek temple itself. Although anthropologists were uncertain of the specifics of how these lands were settled and how the peoples interacted, Semper (1851) had no doubts about ancient Greece, "that the most varied constituent parts of older civilizations were deposited here and intermingled and in

[4] Worbs (1995) notes that this destructive nature of Loos' architecture is praised by Benjamin in his article "Karl Kraus" and "Der destruktive Character" published in *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften*. See Worbs, 1995, p. 520.

[5] For two interpretations of Semper's anthropological approach, see van Eck, 2021 and Payne, 2021.

a great metamorphosis of people shot together (like Parian marble) from sedimentary conditions into a crystal-clear independence" (p. 102).

Recognizing "a genealogical link" between Greek and ancient cultures which was manifest in the Doric tribe itself, Semper (1851) refers to ethnology to depict the primordial forms of Greek architecture. "Ethnology, in considering pre-Hellenic social man, offers four noteworthy and singular developments of the building instinct: The *Chinese*, the *Egyptian*, the *Assyrian*, and the *Phoenician*" (p. 113). What Semper describes in his text are not only singular developments within each culture, but also their relations to each other. Social and economic relations between societies cause a kinship among them as well as their building forms and practices:

> From time immemorial the Phoenicians had trade links with the Greeks, who borrowed their written language and many useful inventions, and it should not be surprising that the idea that received its fullest and clearest expression in the Greek temple can be already discerned in the layout of the Phoenician-Jewish temple, certainly less developed but decidedly enough. (Semper, 1851, p. 113)

The genealogical reading of history allows Semper (1851) to draw a morphological relation between the Assyrian tower and the Greek temple, and between the Asiatic enclosed court and the primordial hut (pp. 124-125). Pairing similar types together, Semper achieves a matrix in which identical types form various groups or veritable *block models* ("Egyptian-Doric" or "Oriental-Attic") for further analysis. He attributes these block models to *systems* (the "Egyptian system" or the "Oriental system") that comply or conflict with each other. What comes out of the interactions between these systems is then legible in works of art themselves, for which Semper (1851) gives the example of the wall paintings of Pompeii (pp. 125-126).

Semper's relational thinking, which I try to uncover and emphasize, is not deterministic but intuitive from the start. His interest is not to draw a concrete chart in which types are classified, but instead, to draw an *imaginative* map where a host of possible combinations could be pointed out. In that sense, Semper never thought of writing a history of works of art classified by periods, regions or nations. Instead, taking "events *developing* as it were" within the history of art and archeology, Semper (1861) traced the genealogy of materials involved in these events back to the primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] and turned these specific materials, then, into generic types that constitute the substance of architecture (p. 183).

Semper's proposal of the four elements of architecture, which he materialized in the example of the Caribbean hut, was an outcome of this relational thinking. He defined the four elements of architecture—the *hearth*, the *roof*, the *enclosure*, the *mound*/the *terrace*—in relation to their materials—clay, wood, textile, stone—and the technical arts which produce them—ceramics, carpentry (tectonics), weaving, masonry (stereotomy). Semper (1851) did not conceive of the relations between these elements, materials and technical arts as static, but as open and varied under different geographical and climatic conditions (p. 110).

If one takes Semper's relational thinking at its early stage in *The Four Elements of Architecture*—i.e. before it is further developed and unified with primordial history in *The Style*—and tries to extricate Loos' stance towards it, certain contentions between the two theoreticians appear. First, it must be made clear that the question of style is not seen by both Semper and Loos as specific to architecture, but as an outcome of its relation to various arts including textile arts, ceramics, painting and others. By underlining the relation between textile arts, ceramics and architecture, Semper observed "how textile patterns that had developed in wall hangings were retained or applied to Assyrian bas-reliefs executed in stone" and "how geometric patterns originating in baskets might be transposed into conventional geometric designs on ceramic vases or even applied to column capitals" (Mallgrave, 1996, pp. 284-285). Whereas Semper used the relation as an *analytical* tool to prove that, in ancient cultures, the character of imitation is not conscious but purely traditional, Loos used it as a *dialectical* tool to criticize the degeneration of imitation in Austrian culture, showing how geometric patterns are turned into solitary motifs—such as a lion's head, a column, a knob or a balustrade. The same motif with arbitrary alterations made to it—sometimes extended or shortened, sometimes thickened or thinned—as Loos points out, was then embossed *into* every piece of furniture in the effort to create a "stylish" house. In his article "Glas und Ton," Loos (1898b) argues that the Austrian architects in fact made use of only two motifs in their creations which he likens to the "verses" of a song—the profile and the ornament, which are repeated and applied onto every possible surface (p. 91).

What becomes problematic in terms of Loos' stance towards relational thinking is the fact that he seems to fall into the very categorization of the history of art which had so strongly been rejected by Semper in the investigation into the relations between ancient and Greek cultures in *The Four Elements of Architecture*. Semper did not consider the regional differences between the four societies he investigated—the *Chinese*, the *Egyptian*, the *Assyrian*, and the *Phoenician*—to be determinants for re-constructing a superior/inferior dichotomy in the relation of ancient arts

[6] I am using here the term *block model* with a reference to the structural analysis in social sciences, the main idea of which is based on relational analysis in a social framework.

[7] For Loos' critique to the decoration of a "stylish" room, see Loos, 1898a, p. 75.

to the Greek art (which had, in fact, been Semper's main criticism of the academic history of art). In his observation of differences between the Austrian culture and the Other [*das Andere*], Loos, however, does not problematize this dichotomy and even re-constructs it by signifying the classical antiquity (the Greeks and the Romans), the Americans and English as the *superior* Other or the West, and the Balkanizes, Chinese, Ottomans and Papua New Guineans as the *inferior* Other—the East. Whereas the superior provides Austria with a model of modern conditions for living, the inferior illustrates primitive conditions to avoid.

In that sense, relational thinking is the key theoretical contention between Semper's and Loos' positions within the history of art, casting doubt on several other all to easily correlated meanings in their texts. Consider just the example of the architecture of China, which Loos despises when compared with West, but Semper (1851) praises, proposing to take lessons from their "ancient use of stucco and rich general polychromy" for his own time (p. 107).

DRESSING, TRUTH AND IMITATION

Having discussed two key methodological approaches in Semper's thinking— primordial history and relational analysis—and the ways in which the former approach is appropriated in Loos' thinking while the latter reflects the conflict between them, we must reconsider Semper's principle of dressing at the intersection of Loos' dualistic attitude towards it. Recent studies have masked this attitude, subsuming it under the principle of dressing itself. On the contrary, I argue that the act of dressing itself reveals the contentious nature of the relation between the two architects and is the point of reconciliation for Loos' ambivalent attitude toward Semper on theoretical and practical levels. It reveals both the theoretical contention between relational analysis and primordial history, and the practical one between the material and the subject. What begins the reconciliation within Loos' own theory, in fact, is his conditional reception of the principle of dressing in terms of its practical applications, on the one hand, and the theoretical soundness of Semper's definition of dressing [*Bekleidung*] which is an immanent phenomenon to Loos' "law of dressing," on the other.

In the section "The Principle of Dressing Has Greatly Influenced Style in Architecture and in the Other Arts in All Periods and in All Nations" of *The Style*, Semper evokes the most common connotation of dressing. For Semper (1851), the primordial technique for creating *enclosure* comes from "the art of the *wall fitter* [*Wandbereiter*], that is, the weaver of mats and carpets" (p. 103). Thus, "the carpet in its capacity as a *wall*" creates the primordial spatial enclosure. According to Semper, the weaving of mats and covers out of various materials—such as tree branches, plant fibers and others—and, consequently, the use of wickerwork precede masonry. "Wickerwork was the *essence of the wall*," Semper (1851) writes with implicit reference to the "truth" of building (p. 104). Following this statement, Semper (1851) addresses the etymological relation between the words *Wand* [wall] and *Gewand* [dress] in a footnote, with an emphasis on the same act of weaving these two share: "The German word *Wand* [wall], *paries*, acknowledges its origin. The terms *Wand* and *Gewand* [dress] derive from a single root. They indicate the woven material that formed the wall" (p. 104). [Semper's italics.]

Although solid walls had to be built for reasons of security and rigidity, carpets were still hung in front of solid walls and were the primary creators of the spatial enclosure in ancient arts. According to Semper (1851), the essential meaning of covering the walls with carpets did not change even after the carpets themselves disappeared and were replaced with various "substitutes"— stucco or bitumen plaster as the first substitute, followed later in time by glazed terra cotta, metal plates, and panels of sandstone, granite, alabaster and marble (p. 104).

At this point, it is noteworthy that Semper designates the transformation of the original, functional meaning of dressing into a symbolic one with the word "substitute." By emphasizing the fact that the same patterns and decorations were transferred from a woven domain to a painted one, he ascertains that imitation in ancient arts neither undermined the existence of truth nor implied any intentional forgery. Instead, he reminds us of the means of industrial production whereby copying a pattern—as it is still done today in dressmaking—is a mere technique:

> For a long time the character of the copy followed that of the prototype. The artists who created the painted and sculptured decorations on wood, stucco, fired clay, metal, or stone traditionally though not consciously imitated the colorful embroideries and trellis works of the age-old carpet walls (Semper, 1851, p. 104).

To avoid any contemporary misappropriation of his notion of imitation in ancient arts, Semper acknowledges a concern about altering the meaning of dressing—no less forcefully than Loos. Truth in its primordial applications, he feared, inevitably transforms into conscious imitation in

[8] In her study of Loos' cultural criticism, Stewart (2000) points out that "the signifiers of the Other as cultural renewal" come from the Western culture, while "those which signify the Other as cultural threat" are from the East (p. 65). Although she recognizes the dialectical thinking of Loos and writes on the relation between Benjamin and Loos, there is no discussion in her study about the relation between Semper and Loos. In fact, the influence of Semper on Loos is totally ignored where Semper's name surprisingly appears just in a single footnote.

[9] While writing the section "The Principle of Dressing," in *The Style*, Semper (1861) again points out this etymological relation between *Wand* and *Gewand*, and adds the following statement: "Likewise, *Decke*, *Bekleidung*, *Schranke*, *Zaun* (similar to *Saum*), and many other technical expressions are not somewhat late linguistic symbols applied to the building trade, but reliable indications of the textile origin of these building parts" (p. 255).

the contemporary practice of art. By the time Loos (1898c) uses the words "imitation" and "surrogatkunst" [substitute art] in his article "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung," neither connotes truth in dressing (p. 141). The innocence of imitation in ancient arts has long since turned into purposeful forgery, to which Semper's "substitutes" are mere accomplices.

If this is the case, then, where is this turning point in the history—the moment where imitation becomes degenerated? Though acknowledging the difference between traditional and conscious imitation, Semper does not mention any certain moment in time where a change begins to take place. Nevertheless, he points out a turning point in the Roman era when the artistic creation started to put more emphasis on materiality and construction of the wall than its dressing. In that sense, the order of meanings attributed by Semper to four elements of architecture started to shift. Through its form, the wall overtook the dominant meaning of the roof (Semper, 1851, p. 126).

Loos, however, is more explicit than Semper in defining a moment of rupture between truth and imitation. Imitation, he says, is an outcome of being uncultivated. When Loos (1909) criticizes the architect for having no culture "like nearly every other city inhabitant" (p. 91), he dates his present Vienna as the highpoint of a cultural degeneration that started to evolve in the second half of the nineteenth century. What generates this moment of rupture in human history is precisely a change in the perception of time: "Bis dahin blieb die entwicklung unserer kultur in schönem gleichmäßigen fluß. Man gehorchte der stunde und sah nicht vorwärts und nicht rückwärts" (Loos, 1909, p. 91). Although Loos makes no direct link to architecture, one can follow this assumption and argue that the change in the perception of time is also crucial to understanding the rupture in architectural history and its outcomes: That is, historicism and monumental architecture.

In a chapter of *The Style* entitled "The Principle of Dressing," Semper points out the current interest of the history of art on monumental architecture as opposed to the "prearchitectural conditions" which he venerated in his theory of dressing. Nevertheless, he does not view monumental architecture and the theory of dressing as opposed to one another. The architectural primordial type—the dwelling or the Caribbean hut—is, in fact, the prototype to the "monumental form" (Semper, 1861, p. 255).

For Semper (1861), monumental architecture is the exception for truth in dressing and artistic creation becomes an issue for the legitimization of "exterior adornment" and the "dressing" of structure through "masking of reality" (p. 257). In that sense, only the theatrical and the celebrative nature of architecture, such as dressed scaffoldings, are allowed to mask the materials of the construction underneath and gird the bare structural body with paint, textiles, etc. according to the principle of dressing. Semper (1861) writes in a footnote:

> The denial of reality, of the material, is necessary if form is to emerge as a meaningful symbol, as an autonomous creation of man. Let us make forgotten the means that need be used for the desired artistic effect and not proclaim them loudly, thus missing our part miserably. The untainted feeling led primitive man to the denial of reality in all early artistic endeavors; the great, true masters of art in every field returned to it—only these men in times of high artistic development also *masked the material of the mask*… Masking does not help, however, when *behind* the mask the thing is false or the mask is no good (p. 257). [Semper's italics.]

THE MATERIALITY OF THE DRESSING

Both Semper and Loos are concerned with the idea of dressing and its materiality on two levels: First, the relation of the subject—i.e., the architect—to the material, and second, the relation of one material [*das bekleidete Material*] to another [*das bekleidendes Material*]. Indeed, the principle of dressing offers the possibility of revealing both the analytical and the critical in these reciprocal relations.

The advice given by Semper (1851) to his readers in the first of his five principals for artistic painting "to remain mindful of the carpet as the earliest spatial enclosure," leans arguably toward the analytical end of the spectrum (p. 127). In his article "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung," Loos (1898c), on the other hand, illustrates how acts of misuse and imitation—such as creating wall masses [*Mauerkörper*] instead of spatial enclosures, selecting any kind of dressing that *fits* on these walls, substituting one material for another and being indifferent to the material's pattern language [*Formensprache*]—derive from the relation of the architect to the material (p. 140).

For Loos, the untruthful relation of the architect to the material distorts the relation of one material [*das bekleidete Materia*l] to another [*das bekleidendes Material*], as well. Even though a living room may be dressed with carpets covering the walls and the floor, he would be skeptical about the deceitfulness of such an act of dressing in a contemporary situation. In that situation, not only is the room imitated, but also the act of dressing. What remains independent of this

[10] "For a long time the character of the copy followed that of the prototype. ..." (Semper, 1851, p. 104). "… carpets were also the models for the art of mosaic, which remained for the longest time true to its origin." (Semper, 1851, p. 106) Although Semper (1851) implies in the following sentence that ancient arts came to an end with the Byzantine, there is no explicit reference to the end of truth in the practice of art: "Antique art completed its cycle, having run the full circle back to its origins, and became extinct with Byzantine embroideries. Its swaddling clothes became its burial shroud" (p. 110).

[11] "Als die materialien, die zur bekleidung verwendet werden, noch nicht imitiert wurden, hat man keine gesetze ausgetüftelt. Nun aber scheint es mir hoch an der zeit zu sein." (Loos, 1898c, p. 142.)

cornucopia of imitation, however, is the dressing material [*das bekleidendes Material*] itself—the carpet.

One can argue that in this scene of counterfeit dressing, Loos justifies the autonomy of the dressing material and, consequently, Semper's principle of dressing. In his article "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung," Loos (1898c) proposes to transform the "principle of dressing" into a "law of dressing" [*Gesetz der Bekleidung*] and reveals two purposes of a "law of dressing." First, to prevent false application of the principle of dressing in practice, and second, to bring Semper's proposals for the practical application of dressing up to date, and in this way, to remove the potential confusion between an act of dressing and the principle of dressing. Giving examples of applications with three constructive materials—brick, iron and wood—Loos (1898c) illustrates the various modes of building to which the principle of dressing can be applied (p. 144). He expects not only the architect to be obliged by his law, but workers and artists, as well.

What becomes evident here is the relation of one material—that is *dressed* [das bekleidete Material]—to another one—that is *dressing* [das bekleidendes Material]. To reconstruct this relation within the general principle, Loos proposes that the constructive framework—such as brick walls, iron columns and wooden pillars—and the dressing materials—such as paint, stucco, wallpapers, oil clothes, textiles and carpets—be interrelated in a controlled manner. As the act of dressing always involves two materials—the *dressed* and the *dressing*—he pairs these in various ways following from the most basic of the principles of dressing—that is, the *dressing* is not permitted to imitate the *dressed* material.

Thus, Loos pairs a dressed metal with a dressing metal or with oil paint, but not with a metal-color; and similarly, a dressed wood with a dressing wood or oil paint, but not with a wood-color. He thereby proposes the formation of certain blocks of relational material characteristics—such as metal, wood, colors, techniques. What comes out of this formation can be construed as a matrix of four hypothetical block models in which the intersections of various materials are represented.

CONCLUSION

It is Loos's declaration on dressing and its connection to the spatial enclosure that makes him the most Semperian theoretician and architect. In his article "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung," Loos (1898c) writes: "*Im anfange war die bekleidung*" ["In the beginning, there was dressing"] (p. 139). Then came the cover [*Decke*]; after that, the walls. However, if one also recognizes here the implicit references to *when* and *how* the dressing started, then Loos' affirmation of Semper's principle of dressing must be considered in light of two methodological approaches—*Urgeschichte* and relational analysis.

Primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] and relational analysis suggest not only similarities but also contradictions and reveal the contentious relation between Semper's and Loos's understanding of dressing. Whereas Semper sets the origin of the principle of dressing at the history of antiquity and investigates truth in ancient arts, Loos locates his law of dressing directly against the imitations of dressing from the mid-nineteenth century up to his present time. Thus, it is the primordial history of modernity where Loos confronts symbolic contradictions of the material transformation. Relational analysis, on the other hand, serves as a guide to a genealogy of architecture for both Semper and Loos. They explore the relations between societies, technical arts, buildings, objects, materials, techniques and procedures, and then pair the most identical types by creating groups, associations, blocks in an imaginary matrix. By tracing the genealogy of materials, they illustrate the process of this "metamorphosis," that is "a new material transformation (*Stoffwechsel*)" and a new understanding of "architecture as procedure," as Deamer (2000, p. 109) points out. According to Semper, it is the ultimate form of the *Urtypus* where multiple phases of this process are recorded as a genealogical memory. Where primordial history [*Urgeschichte*] and relational analysis link to each, the theoretical contention between Semper and Loos becomes apparent. Openness, variety and multiplicity are precisely the sound values of Semper's principle of dressing which allow it to be transformed under new conditions of architectural practice—as Loos was to do—without losing any of its basic ideas. Loos' conditional adoption of the principle of dressing in terms of its practical applications, on the other hand, is evidence of an attempt to bring a highly theoretical discussion into the domain of practice and to make it available to architects and builders.

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[12] In his article "Das Prinzip der Bekleidung," Loos (1898c) explicitly illustrates the act of dressing by the use of carpets: "Aber ist der wohnraum, der ganz mit teppichen ausgelegt ist, keine imitation? Die wände sind ja nicht aus teppichen gebaut! Gewiß nicht. Aber diese teppiche wollen nur teppiche sein und keine mauersteine, sie wollen nie für solche gehalten werden, zeigen dies weder durch farbe noch muster, sondern bringen ihre bedeutung als bekleidung der mauerfläche klar zutage. Sie erfüllen ihren zwecke nach dem prinzipe der bekleidung" (p. 141).

[13] "Dieses gesetz lautet also: Die möglichkeit, das bekleidete material mit der bekleidung verwechseln zu können, soll auf alle fälle ausgeschlossen sein. Auf einzelne fälle angewendet, würde dieser satz lauten: Holz darf mit jeder farbe angestrichen werden, nur mit einer nicht – der holzfarbe" (Loos, 1898c, p. 141).

[14] A further discussion of cladding and the materiality of dressing in Loos's interiors is needed; yet, it exceeds the limits of this paper. For an analysis of the American Bar (or Loos-Bar) in Vienna and the dressing materials Loos used, see Moravánsky, 1996, p. 43.

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