REVOLUTION THROUGH BEAUTIFUL MODERN ART:

RENÉ HERBST'S *CHAISES SANDOWS* AND THE UNION DES ARTISTS

MODERNES (1929-1937)

by

KIERSTEN ELAINE MOUNCE

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Student: Kiersten Elaine Mounce

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This thesis has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture by:

Albert Narath	Chairperson
Erin Cunningham	Member
Keith Eggener	Member

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research and Innovation; Dean of the Graduate School

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Kiersten Elaine Mounce

Master of Arts

Department of the History of Art and Architecture

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At the Salon d'Automne of 1929, French designer René Herbst (1891-1982) inaugurated the *Chaises Sandows*, a series of mass produced chairs built with seamless tubular steel and brightly colored elastic straps (*sandows*). The chairs were deemed *beautiful* modern art by the Union des Artists Modernes (U.A.M.), a revolutionary artist collective that Herbst co-founded the same year. The group defined beautiful objects as those that provided psychological repose and were financially attainable for every class, highly functional and socially engaged. Based on the naturalism of Hyppolite Taine, the U.A.M. believed that if beautiful art like the *Chaise Sandows* was consumed en masse, an egalitarian utopia would be produced. This thesis offers comprehensive understanding of their project as defined by Herbst and their manifesto and the group's connection with larger political concerns during the interwar period.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Kiersten Elaine Mounce

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, History of Art and Architecture, 2014, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, Art History, 2010, Wheaton College

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Modern Architecture of Europe
Decorative Arts and Design

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, 2012-2014

Coordinator of Museum Services, Elmhurst Art Museum, 2011-2012

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Marian Donnelly Travel Grant, University of Oregon, 2013

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE *CHAISES SANDOWS*, RENÉ HERBST AND L'UNION DES ARTISTS MODERNES

At the Salon d'Automne of 1929, French designer René Herbst (1891-1982) exhibited for the first time the *Chaise Sandows*, a series of mass-produced chairs built with seamless tubular steel and brightly colored elastic straps known as *sandows*. In his ensemble, *Le Petit Salon*, there were a total of six *Chaises Sandows* of two iterations, both characterized by sharp angles and straight lines [Fig. 1; see the Appendix for all figures]. All were produced in series at his manufacturing plant, R-H Établissement, along with the fourteen other versions [Fig. 2]. While Herbst would come to use sandows for both back rest and seat, these early chairs used a rope netting stretched taught across the seat, and some were covered with cushions designed by Hélèn Henry. The space included tables composed of wood and steel decorated with only a few objects and a ceiling light that shocked visitors because of its uncovered light bulbs.

As a physical object made of seamless tubular steel and sandows, the intended large quantities of the *Chaises Sandows* would have been nearly impossible to produce in France before the First World War. It was only for the return of Alsace Lorrain and the development of aviation technology that these materials were made accessible enough to Herbst for the creation of mass-produced furniture.

Alsace Lorrain was lost to the Germans during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 and France was required to import much of their steel from abroad during the Great War. Although Alsace Lorrain was a small department that contained only 14% of

France's industrial workers, it produced 58% of the steel and 40% of the coal.[1] With this influx of local resources, manufacturing plants expanded. Both tubular steel and rubber straps were used in aircrafts; the former was used in the structure and engines and the latter was used in undercarriages for landing gears. Germany had no less than 230 aircrafts active and France had 138 in 1914, making theirs the two largest aviation departments in Europe. These numbers rose exponentially as the need for different specialized types arose, as they transitioned from using tools of reconnaissance to armed aircrafts. Variations developed quickly from here, so that by 1919 Germany had over 45 types of aircrafts and France had 33.

Seamless tubular steel was first developed in the late 19th century, originally the simple process of drilling through a cylindrical steel mold. Nearing the 20th century, this process was replaced with one that pushed a billet trough a steel form, making it hallow before elongating the pipe. It had a variety of uses including bicycle frames and automobile engines. It was this method that Herbst used for his furniture. As with most sandows used during the first World War, those on a *Chaise Sandows* were elastic cords covered with a cotton sheath produced in a wide variation of colors: bright green, yellow and red, along with black and occasionally white.

Herbst's exhibit in 1929 garnered attention, as did that of his colleagues, Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand, who exhibited their series *Equipment for Living*. Between these designers, the Salon d'Automne of 1929 marked the triumphant inaugural

[1] Hardach, *The First World War*, 81-82.

[2] Throughout their careers, designers like Herbst and Perriand would choose and receive different

use of tubular steel in French furniture, despite heavy opposition.[2] These designers shared a love of this material, particularly because it supported their social agenda. They found it to be fittingly modern in its means of production, visual simplicity and utility. It was used to make inexpensive objects that would replace what they saw as antiquated wooden furniture, dirty with dust and archaic in style. It also proved to be a divisive material: both tubular steel and the mass production methods which were used to produce it would stand on the left side in debates over French interior design for the next ten years.

A year earlier in 1928, Herbst, Perriand and Djo Bourgeois had anonymously exhibited a sitting room arrangement under the title of *l'Unité de choc* at the Salon de la Société des Artistes Décorateurs (S.A.D.) [Fig. 3]. The arrangement included three chairs of chromed tubular steel covered by cloth or carpet, a large rug, a two-tiered round metal and wood side table, and a rectangular collage depicting similar furniture set in other locations. Unfortunately for the three designers, the S.A.D. did not allow them to exhibit at the following year's Salon because their ideals and aesthetic were so antithetical.

The S.A.D. encouraged the creation of unique luxury objects that required wealthy clients, while Herbst and his companions were interested in creating an egalitarian utopia in France through the mass production and consumption of quality, inexpensive objects. Although tensions had existed over these ultimately political issues in the S.A.D. before the First World War, these exclusionary strategies marked a breaking point that pushed nearly twenty members to defect and subsequently organize an alternative design group.

[2] Throughout their careers, designers like Herbst and Perriand would choose and receive different vocational titles. Herbst's titles were especially dexterous, beginning with "decorator" and moving through "decorator-architect," "architect-decorator," "artist-decorator." He is currently classified at the Musée des arts décoratifs (Paris) as an architect. For most of Le Corbusier's career, he preferred the term "Designer," despite being dissatisfied with its vagueness.

The Union des Artists Modernes (U.A.M.) was formed in answer in 1929 with the goal of affecting social revolution through the reformation of French decorative art. While the S.A.D. encouraged historicist ornament, the U.A.M. celebrated stark visual simplicity. The S.A.D. was economically supported by the State in their desire to export markedly "French" objects, while the U.A.M. was more interested in challenging the State and its established design aesthetic.

The U.A.M. existed in various states between 1929 and 1958, though they were always working through design towards a utopia in response to the chaos produced by the World Wars, the Great Depression, and technological advancements. Being dedicated students of Hippolyte Taine's French naturalism, they believed that a fundamental change in the built environment was the primary requirement for inner and inter-personal peace. The U.A.M. believed neither the need nor the opportunity for malignant human actions would exist when the entire French population radically altered their antiquated built environment and embraced contemporary technology re-appropriated from the war industry, stating in 1932:

> The day slums are replaced by healthy housing there will be no more discontent. When everyone can rest after a day's work and enjoy a healthy family life, there will be no more need of newspapers because there will be nothing to report. Goodbye murder, goodbye theft—one cannot burgle a well-lit house, a house in which all the doors are open and everything can be seen. Society would derive considerable benefit from this way of organizing things, because, in the end, what we desire is inner peace. [3]

This healthy, well-lit, and transparent architecture was described as beautiful by U.A.M. No longer restricted to aesthetics, beautiful art was redefined by the group as having four

[3] Delaporte-Idrissi, Guillemette. 2004. *René Herbst: Pioneer of Modernism*. Paris: Flammarion, 199.

primary tenants: high functionality, visual simplicity, financial attainability, and a concern for social issues. This issue of redefining what constituted beautiful art was the central concern of U.A.M.'s manifesto, *Pour l'Art Moderne: cadre de la vie contemporaine* (1934), especially as it surrounded debates about ornament and technology.

The manifesto was a 35-page document physically designed by Pierre Legrain, drafted primarily by Herbst and Louis Chéronnet, and signed by all 23 active members in 1934. In the manifesto, the U.A.M. planned to "completely solve a series of closely related artistic problems that came to be complicated by entirely new social, technical, psychological, and economical facts" with their designs.[4] The manifesto was written in direct response to accusations of purportedly embracing an "Ocean liner style," a "clinical style," and "awful nudism," and most significantly, German and Protestant styles—an accusation which served to make them traitors to the French Nation in the eyes of their countrymen. The manifesto replied to all of these accusations through redefining key terms like *tradition*, *beauty*, and *French*. Their strategy of redefinition was a similar tactic to that of the Popular Front, a coalition of leftist parties who wished to establish themselves as the culmination of the nation's struggle for peace during the 1930s.[5]

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[4] U.A.M., *Pour l'Art Moderne*, 2. My translation.

[5] As Jackson notes in her book, "The Popular Front in France," the terms *Ressmblement Populaire* (*gathering)* and *Front Populaire* were both used until 1936. It is further known in Englad as *People's Front*. However, the militant language of *front* ultimately won the day and will be consistently used in this thesis. I am grateful to Julian Jackson's book which I relied on for the clarity with which he communicates the ideals and history of the movement.

The Popular Front was the union of the Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière (SFIO), Parti communiste français (PCF), and Parti républicain, radical et radical-socialiste (Radical Socialist), united in January 1936 and elected into office in May of that year. The three parties set their sometimes extreme differences aside to follow the SFIO leader Léon Blum against their common enemy, Pierre Laval's Cartel des gauches, and more importantly, impending fascism from international origins. However, the Popular Front's success came at the cost of a long line of bloody demonstrations beginning before 1934, and although their demonstrations became "gatherings" after they achieved power, the volatile conditions they produced continued during and past their party's demise in 1938 and into the Second World War.

The U.A.M. was inherently connected with the Popular Front from the beginning for three main reasons. Firstly, the two groups were somewhat fluid: they shared members between them, many of whom held positions of influence in both. This included both Fernand Léger and Le Corbusier who shared membership in both groups. Secondly, they held similar values and an understanding of humanity. They both considered the "total individual," desired to break down traditional class barriers, and wanted to popularize art. Thirdly, the U.A.M. was dedicated to exhibiting in the heart of the city alongside demonstrations and government. They placed their exhibitions in the Palais du Louvre, the Place de la Concorde, and international exhibitions, never shrinking away from the harsh contrasts created between their work and the nation's traditions. Both the U.A.M. and the Popular Front were ultimately concerned with alleviating the pain brought to the public by international events.

Although René Herbst served as the U.A.M.'s president for only a few years, he remained actively involved throughout its entire existence and instigated many of the ideological connections between the Popular Front and the U.A.M. The unpublished texts by Herbst contain the same language that would appear in the U.A.M.'s manifesto; occasionally entire paragraphs that Herbst had written in the late 1920s were included verbatim in *Pour l'Art Moderne*. He served as an apt representative of the group for this reason and two others: his life experiences as a soldier in World War One and the subsequent need "to do something more"[6] were commonly shared with many members of the group. Secondly, his *Chaises Sandows* were beloved as an icon for both groups, seen as the zenith of beautiful modern French art, and consistently used by other members in diverse exhibitions, appearing in them more often than any other objects.

To the U.A.M., Herbst also contributed exhibition and graphic designs, while separately building exhibition structures for the Office technique pour l'utilisation de l'acier (OUTA) and continuing his pre-war work of creating commercial interiors. His service in *l'Aviation militaire* and the department's competition with Germany on the Western Front greatly affected the *Chaises Sandows* which represented the larger effect of the aviation industry on the decorative arts of both France and Germany. Working with aircrafts and their developing technology, he was introduced to his favored tubular steel and bungee cords. In the 1930s, he was nicknamed "L'Homme d'Acier" for the large amount of steel he incorporated into his designs, the manufacturing plant that he started

[6] Delaporte-Idrissi, *René Herbst*, 171.

in 1925 and his position at OUTA, where he was employed to encourage the use of steel by the general public and in the arts.

The general obsession with transportation technology by decorative artists and the wider public should also be noted. The streamlined functionality of ocean liners and airplanes particularly caught the attention of the designers as an answer to the problem of modernity and the imagination of their clients. The airplane and the new abilities it extended to human beings especially influenced Le Corbusier and Herbst. Like the plane was a machine for flying and the house a machine for living, Herbst's *Chaise Sandows* was a machine for sitting. It fulfilled all the necessary requirements which constituted beautiful modern art, according to the U.A.M. The contemporaneity of its design, production process and materials made it an entirely modern object.

This thesis will follow the *Chaise Sandows* through exhibitions in France and abroad between 1930-1937 in order to explain how the chairs were used as a symbol for social revolution by the U.A.M. Following the chair through its exhibition history during the 1930s makes its beauty evident, as each unique exhibition situation served to emphasize certain elements of the chair and how the U.A.M. understood it to support their utopian goal. Chapter one will discuss the first U.A.M. exhibition in 1930, where Herbst used the *Chaise Sandows* in his ensemble *Le Salon de Musique* in order to accentuate its ability to provide psychological repose through its visual simplicity and comfort. Chapter two will discuss the fourth U.A.M. exhibition in 1934, when two *Chaises Sandows* were displayed on a pedestal in the manner of traditional sculpture. Along with the manifesto released concurrent to this exhibition, this presentation method argued that tubular steel furniture fit into the lineage of fine French art and celebrated the

financial and social benefits of mass production. In 1934, the U.A.M. also began cementing its ties with the future Popular Front, exhibiting alongside the party's demonstrations at Place de la Concorde against the government's support of the S.A.D. Chapter three will discuss Herbst's *Salle de Gym* within the *Foyer de la Famille* at the 1935 International Exposition in Brussels. Here it was evident that the *Chaise Sandows* possessed concurrent statuses as art and equipment to serve the "total individual" and "modern man." Finally, chapter four will discuss how the U.A.M. used *Chaises Sandows* as guest seating in their pavilion at the Universal Exposition of 1937, the Exposition Internationale des "Arts et des Techniques Appliqués à la Vie Moderne. The chairs served within the U.A.M.'s program of social activism, supported by the newly elected government of the Popular Front. Through all of these exhibitions, the *Chaise Sandows* symbolized a utopian future, one that would value the mind and body of the human above all other concerns.

The U.A.M. has been long overlooked by scholarship, which largely focuses on members like Le Corbusier, Charlotte Perriand, or Eileen Grey as individuals. The U.A.M. is generally only mentioned or footnoted in these cases. Other members of the U.A.M. have been considered, but only in their relationship to Le Corbusier and as recipients of his ideas. However, the archives of René Herbst and the U.A.M. held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Paris) contain almost forty boxes which contain original photographs, unpublished articles, newspaper clippings, and records of correspondences. Along with these records, I relied on three books which publish portions of the archive: *The U.A.M.* by Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault; *René Herbst* by Solange Goguel; and *René Herbst: pioneer of modernism* by Guillemette Delaporte-

Idrissi.

With these sources as the foundation of my thesis, it aims to offer a more holistic view of modernism in interwar France, putting Le Corbusier within the U.A.M. and focusing on René Herbst, who was a prime director of the group's program. Moreover, this thesis situates the U.A.M.'s activities within the political events and social climate of a very volatile France, examining their designs, texts and exhibitions in dialogue with other revolutionaries and the government, especially as the Popular Front gained prominence between 1934-1936.

By connecting the various narratives that inform this thesis, I am clearly indebted to a number of scholars and their work. Regarding the history and social power of furniture, Lenora Auslader's *Taste and Power* comprehensively traces the relationship between furniture design, materials, production processes, and power in France starting in the 18th century and into the beginning of the 20th. Meredith Clausen's writing on Frantz Jourdain established a firm base for considering the philosophies of rationalism and naturalism, and provided a representation of the Paris Herbst and the U.A.M. were coming into. There have been few histories of the Popular Front in France written since the 1970s, especially in English body of texts. Julius Jackson's *The Popular Front* was invaluable for the author's presentation of a detailed history little affected by his own political affiliations. In method, I learned greatly from Romy Golan's *Modernity and Nostalgia* and Kenneth Silver's *Esprit du Corps*. The content of both texts are connected to my own study, but I am in greater debt to the example both authors set for weaving together narratives of popular culture, politics, and art practice to present a coherent argument for their stories.

CHAPTER II

1930 SALON DE MUSIQUE: PSYCHOLOGICAL REPOSE

In June of 1930, *l'Union des Artists Modernes* held their first exhibition in the Marsan Pavilion of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (M.A.D.), curated by Robert Mallet-Stevens with the help of lighting engineer André Salmon. The museum was in the north arm of the Palais du Louvre, where it had been located since 1905. Inside this monumental and highly ornamented building, the three galleries dedicated to temporary exhibitions were filled with tubular steel, large mirrors and geometric patterned stained glass. This very contemporary exhibition was abnormal for the museum to show, which exhibited five to seven temporary shows a year, all generally in the vein of *Tenture de l'Apocalypse* (1923) and *L'Art byzantin* (1931).[7] The museum had been known as a place of conservation but was beginning to exhibit increasingly contemporary shows similar to the U.A.M.'s during the 1930s.

This first U.A.M. exhibition included recent work from all of their 23 members, each of whom displayed what they understood to be revolutionary objects. Perriand displayed a tubular steel office ensemble composed of *B306*, *Grand Confort*, and large desk.[8] Pierre Chareau displayed a multi-functional desk with a variety of unique drawers and a built in record player. Sonia Delaunay and Hélèn Henry both displayed rugs with abstract designs and geometric patterns. Francis Jourdain showed an entire room built

[7] Brunhammer, *Le Beau dans l'Utile*, 79.

[8] The catalogue attribution includes the subtitle: Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret. However, as they were not yet part of the U.A.M., Perriand took top billing.

with cubic wooden furniture that he called "exchangeable furniture." Geometric jewelry, ceiling lights and photographs of reinforced concrete buildings were also shown. Herbst exhibited *Salon de Musique*, an ensemble of furniture that he designed with the goal of providing psychological repose by supplying their users with comfort and extra time and space, valuable commodities in the tumultuous interwar city.

Because the U.A.M.'s utopian project was based on Hippolyte Taine's philosophy of naturalism, members believed that by changing contexts, individuals could be changed and society would follow. Furthermore, they believed an answer to the problems of the chaotic city was the sanctuary of the interior and, specifically, the removal of ornament from these interior spaces. This philosophical foundation could be seen in the *Salon de Musique*'s multi-functional and comfortable furniture, all of which required minimal space and demanded little attention due to its lack of ornamentation. Herbst displayed what the U.A.M. considered beautiful modern art, that which provided psychological repose. However, this value of simplicity challenged the hegemony of historicist ornament and incited derogatory epithets that compared these designs to the interiors of ocean liners and medical clinics. Regardless, the U.A.M. saw Herbst's *Salon de Musique* as successfully representing a future utopia and constituting an appropriate response to their contemporary conditions.

Salon de Musique

Extant photographs of *la Salon de Musique* [Fig. 4] were taken by the U.A.M.'s secretary Raymond Templier from the perspective of visitors.[9] They show a square room with black flooring and smooth, light-colored walls just large enough for their contents. A baby-grand piano and Sandow seat [Fig. 5] stood against the farthest wall, on which hung a textile designed by Henry appearing as curtains covering a window.[10] Near visitors on the left wall sat a multi-use cabinet whose doors expanded to produce swinging bookshelves and other specific forms of storage**.** Finally, a bridge table surrounded by four *Chaises Sandows* was arranged in the front right section of the room. The light color of the room's three walls sharply contrasted with the shiny black floor, which sloped slightly up and away from visitors to make the piano's feet visible and the space feel more immediate.[11]

Despite the apparent somber tone of the black and white photographs, the room did contain a bright green color used throughout the furniture and hanging textile. While no color photographs of the exhibition exist, the piano seat is held in the museum

[9] Templier's photos were used as records for the work and left in the care of René Herbst during the first five years of the U.A.M. They were included in the archives left by Herbst to the Musée des arts décoratifs.

[10] The piano was the product of a long tradition of Pleyel, who asked designers to create specialized pianos. Being the longest operational instrument manufacturer in France, Herbst's creating a Sandow style piano provided legitimacy to himself as an artist and his work. In fact, this was the second piano Herbst designed for the company. The first was the "Auto-Pleyel," an automated standup piano first displayed at the *Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in 1925. Pleyel would later produce pianos designed by Jacques-Emile Rulhmann, Pierre Legrain, René Prou, and Paul Fallot. Like Herbst, Fallot's piano was displayed at the U.A.M. pavilion at the 1937 *Exposition of arts and technology* and later installed on the SS Normandie.

[11] It is worth noting the connection here between this exhibit floor and the display designs for which Herbst was previously famous. Herbst developed the angled display floor for shop windows. Here, the same system is visible. The temporary floor was constructed with long woden planks covered by a shiny black material, evident in the pulling that occurs at the edges and seams. Others innovative display technique included clear shoe racks and mannequins.

collection of Musée des Arts Décoratifs and notes accompanying the archival photographs remark that the color is consistent in the following ways: the textile by Henry that covered the left half of the back wall had a light green base fabric with darker, vertically aligned rectangles of varying shades placed sporadically but reconciled to a grid [Fig. 6]. The tabletop was also green; it was a square of wood covered in baize fabric that was secured around the edge with a strip of metal and faceted with bolts. Finally, the sandows on the four chairs matched those of the piano bench, completing the diagonal line of color.

The Sandow bench in front of the piano had a square seat and straight legs with multiple joints; rather than two long bent pieces serving as the frame, three pipes for each leg intersected one another with sharp, right angles. The seat had two support pipes between the legs, running parallel with the straps and fused into the legs near their top. The game table also used tubular steel for legs: two vertical "H" shapes were formed with three pipes each, their crossbars a few inches above the ground. The two legs crossed each other at their center to form an "X" parallel with the floor. Around the table were four identical *Chaises Sandow*, one at each side. For each, the frame of the seat and back was constructed with two continuous, parallel pipes that curved gracefully to compose the entire upper portion of the chair, into which the green straps were placed at equal distances across the entire curve. The back leg pipes were directly fused into it. Like the legs of the piano seat, the front legs of the chair met the end of the curved pipe with a sharp right angle.

Taine's Naturalism and Frantz Jourdain's Rationalism

The *Salon de Musique* exemplified interiors that the U.A.M. believed would engender a peaceful and equal nation of people when used by the masses. This belief in the ability of objects or buildings to affect the interactions between people was nothing new, especially in the history of architects, and the U.A.M. relied on the philosopher Hippolyte Taine as the foundation for their project. It was an intellectual debt they honored in their manifesto with two quotes by Taine and a proclamation of their high esteem for the philosopher.[12] The first quote[13] assured artists that work would come once they immersed themselves into their century and the second[14] was Taine's explanation of the tendencies different nationalities have, both ideas imperative to his theory of naturalism.

Naturalism proposed that an individual's actions or a work of art are caused by one's *race, milieu* and *moment* (in the words of Taine). Leo Weinstein translated these concepts in his biography of Taine as *nation*, *environment*, and *era* (or *situation*).[15] This

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[12] Taine considered himself a philosopher, historian, political theorist and art critic. Taine was a professor of Aesthetics and History of Art at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and publications of his lectures were widely circulated, influencing well-remembered thinkers like Émile Zola, Bourget and Maupassant. Like U.A.M., these authors applied Taine's principles in there own specific contexts.

[13] L'Union des Artists Modernes, *Pour l'Art Moderne*, 3. My translation. This quote is actually a translation of Goethe. As chapter two of this thesis argues, U.A.M. was emphatic about the Frenchness of their designs. Taine's Frenchness was important to U.A.M. and pointed out in the Manifesto. Using Taine's translation of Goethe acted as means of legitimization. "Taine said, in the words of Goethe: 'Replenish your mind and your heart, so vast they are, with ideas and sentiments of your century and the work will come.'

[14] Ibid., 9. "The finesse and the natural precociousness of the Latin people have many bad consequences: they give into their need of agreeable sensations, they easy become epicureans, luxurious... They want to know exquisite sensations. On the other hand, their vivacity of impression and their promptitude to action made them improvisators. They have a taste very keen for the inside and the décor of things, for the pompous representation which flatter the senses and vanity."

[15] Weinstein, *Hippolyte Taine*, 80.

categorization was Taine's attempt to understand the world—biological, cultural or otherwise—through a system of science, according to his training.[16] Perhaps more accurate to contemporary definitions, Meredith Clausen translated Taine's categories as "Psychological composition, socio-economic situation and historical context."[17] It is important to note that Clausen's phrase "psychological composition" is closer to Taine's concept of *race* than Weinstein's "nation," since Taine meant the term to refer to a group of individuals who experience collective hegemonies and display a collective cultural disposition rather than a group who share genetic connections or locations of origin.[18] The U.A.M.'s foundation of naturalism, this soci-historical determinism is evident throughout the manifesto, both in the prominent thread of nationalism and their belief that they can change a nation by changing the daily environment through furniture.

Despite Taine's desire for distinction between himself and rationalists, a large portion of his philosophy followed that of Descartes. Weinstein writes that Taine disliked the 17th century rational "spirit," although he shared the following goals in common with Descartes: ridding philosophy of scholastic and spiritual entities, proceeding in an orderly step-by-step method based on factual evidence, and applying to moral subject matter the processes and tools provided by the state of science at the time.[19] Indeed, both men used the popular and developing fields of their respective times, Descaretes with mathematics

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[16] Many others worked on this idea of cultural determinism. Writing concurrently to U.A.M. in 1935, John H. Mueller asked, *Is Art the Production of its Age?*

[17] Clausen, *Frantz Jourdain and the Samaritaine*, 55

[18] *Hyppolite Taine*, L Weinstein, 35

[19] *Ibid.*

and Taine with the physical and natural sciences.[20] Despite Taine's reticence, the U.A.M eagerly took up the language of rationalism under the influence of Frantz Jourdain. For the U.A.M. then, naturalism told them they could change the country by changing their context and rationalism supplied the criteria of what type of objects would change it for the better.

Frantz Jourdain[21] had fought for the appreciation of rational design throughout his career as an architect. By the late 1920s he was spending more time writing than designing furniture and relied on his reputation as an innovative designer to legitimatize his controversial texts. Clausen explains in her book on Frantz Jourdain and *La Samaritain* that Jourdain's rationalism demanded architectural designs "based on and derived from reasoned desiderata rather than from arbitrary, preconceived forms. Drawing on the views of Labrouste, Viollet-leDuc, and other progressive rationalists, Jourdain maintained that this meant employing new structural systems that were designed specifically for and tailored to the functions of modern society… This meant using new materials, modern technology, and industrial process."[22] Regarding decoration, Frantz Jourdain believed that it should not be arbitrary but an integral part and a condition of structure. For Jourdain, furniture was made to serve the intellect of man, his logical needs; he considered this the main characteristic of humanity.

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[20] This connection would again be prominent in 1935, *Salle de gym*.

[21] There were three Jourdains connected with the U.A.M.: Frantz (1847-1935), his son Francis (1876-1958), and his grandson Frantz-Philippe (1906-1990). For clarity's sake, I will henceforth use both first and last names in this thesis.

[22] Clausen, *Frantz Jourdain and the Samaritaine*, 61.

As Herbst wrote of rational furniture: "Reason can find no content in disorder: the imagination alone is not enough to gratify the intelligence. The sight of an inexpensive plate does not unsettle one's reason; it is, however, shocked and outraged by a dish by Bernard Palissy. A piece of furniture by Gallé is a mistake, or a great folly: the artist who makes an armchair so as to interpret a line of Baudelaire just creates a muddle."[23] Opposed to ornamented objects based on his elevation of reason, Herbst made functional ones. Frantz Jourdain's son Francis Jourdain was often quoted by the U.A.M. members as explaining that furniture "should not resemble intrusive and talkative visitors, but discreet servants who know how not to waylay us with their quaintly eccentric attire or unwarranted eloquence. The only statement to be tolerated on the part of an armchair is an invitation to repose."[24]

The U.A.M. took this position seriously and designed furniture to occupy minimal space and cause minimal disruption. Members considered the visual character of their creations, although it was ultimately the function that was of greatest importance, in service to the individual user. This was seen in the *Chaises Sandows'* provision of comfort without indulging in over-stuffed pillows. They were individual pieces made for precise purposes: "The unique piece of furniture in a room, adapted to one's needs—this is rational furniture for man. In it, man finds everything he needs…"[25] Rational design was the answer to the problems of the outside world.

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[23] Delaporte-Idrissi, *René Herbst*, 192.

[24] Jourdain, *Les Cahiers Rationalistes,* 1937.

[25] Herbst, *Multipurpose Furniture*, 1932. Translated by Delaporte in *Herbst,* 136.

Dangers of Ornament and the City

The fear of the modern, dirty urban center is a story that has been amply told elsewhere and was shared by the U.A.M. Concern about air conditions, access to sunlight, and all manner of worries associated with hygiene were rampant as industry again expanded during World War I and people were left to live in the mess that had been made by technology having developed too quickly. Moreover, space was limited like never before for urban dwellers and the U.A.M. relied upon homes to provide a sanctuary from the terror of the outside world. They did so by saving space with multi-functional and comfortable furniture and were intolerant of applied ornamentation.

The U.A.M. warned: "Do not forget that, by the force of new economic conditions, we are increasingly called to live in cramped quarters… and that we need to consider the hours of repast and of repose as necessary, of which we shouldn't lose any minute. This is true today for almost all classes of society, even, relatively speaking, for the more wealthy."[26] For these reasons, the U.A.M. members Perriand and Mallet-Stevens would pioneer the built-in and detachable multi-functioning cabinet, along with Herbst, as demonstrated in the cabinet displayed in the *Salon de Musique*.

The fact that the furniture in *Salon de Musique* looked more like café furniture than like the pieces usually found sitting in music rooms was irrelevant to the U.A.M. because the objects served, without confusion, human reason. Herbst wrote, "We thus deduce that furniture is not for such and such a class of society, but for different uses; namely: furniture for doing the cooking, for eating on, for working with, for lying down

[26] Ibid., 15. My translation.

on etc."[27] Therefore, Herbst displayed furniture for sitting, for storage, and for playing the piano. This was a position opposed by the Societé des Artists Décorateurs and the State, especially over the issue of ornament.

For a long time, the sales of unique "French" furniture with historicist ornament had been a reliable income for the State thanks to export taxes, which became an important concern as France struggled economically in its attempt to rebuild and repay war debts concurrent to the franc's value plummeting and the Great Depression hitting. The exchange rate of the franc fell as French industry progressed, reaching its peak production output in June of 1930.[28] Compared to the dollar, the French franc fell from 5.45 francs per dollar in January 1919 to 10.87 in December of the same year. This trend continued until January of 1933, when the franc hit its bottom limit at 25.62 Francs per US Dollar.[29] A tremendous amount of resources were needed to rebuild, but Germany paid little reparations until 1926, making income from other resources even more imperative. This meant the State encouraged the production of designs composed of expensive materials mined from her colonies and identifiable as French, as indicated by historicist ornament. To that end, the state financially supported schools and commissioned artists producing obviously "French" luxury objects, and gave them monumental commissions.

The issues of ornament became important to members of the U.A.M. Ornament was separate from provisions of comfort because it was not seen as supporting

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[27] Delaporte, *Herbst*, 136.

[28] Wolfe, *The French Franc between the Wars,* 54.

[29] Ibid., 213.

psychological repose; indeed, ornament was seen as dishonest and a disruption to modern life because it made poorly constructed objects appear well built, propagated false information about the owner, and contributed to the purposeful misremembering and subsequent glorification of past eras. Moreover, historicist ornament was not considered contemporary, no matter how abstracted, manipulated, or rearranged it was; therefore, it was not fit for the new modern man and his troubles. New man needed new furniture- not merely the removal of this offensive, dishonest ornament, but new forms, a new paradigm all together. Its beauty would come from its function, from its representation of modernity, from its accessibility to the masses.

The U.A.M.'s manifesto explained how recycling past ornamental styles perpetuated misinformation about the owner of such furniture because the semiotic system of ornament was flawed and irrelevant in the 20th century. French ornamental styles had heavy connotations of gender and registers of formality that dictated the object's "Frenchness," and had for a long time served the French aristocracy by expressing information regarding the owner's position, power, morality, and nationality. As the bourgeoisie developed through the 19th century and the national level of consumption increased, the semiotics of furniture became increasingly important to people in every class and to the separation of classes. With the advent of greater consumption came the capacity for objects to create identities which represented, as well as segregated, more sectors of classes.

Within this system, largely based on ornamental style, furniture "bestowed connotations of gender, age, and profession (by style, wood and color) on the very forms of furniture, so that it could suit both the individual within the household and the entire

family, and produced a rather complex and often contradictory set of semiotic codes that had to be mastered if one were to be a successful consumer."[30] Historian Lenora Auslander explained in her book *Taste and Power* that mastering the semiotics in order to represent your household correctly to the public was important, and the code was pervasive enough that in popular literary texts, furniture descriptions supplemented the physical descriptions of their owners; a good description of the furniture which a person owned provided all the necessary information about his social and economic standing.[31]

Auslander continues, "Furniture could now be one's friend, represent one's position in the social world, keep one's family safe, assure one's heritage, and help constitute the nation itself. Much was being asked of 'things."[32] In this system, those objects that were the most "French" were the most expensive, formal and stereotypically masculine. The object's gender was dependent on the style's age, and the older the style the more masculine it was. Monarchical styles closer to the French Revolution were seen as weak and effeminate, only appropriate for a woman's bedchamber. A room such as *Salon de Musique* should have contained furniture reminiscent of Henry II or, if the owners were very wealthy, they would have antique furniture made during Henry II's reign, regardless of how many times it had been repaired.

The U.A.M. recognized that this system did not correlate to the interwar period, and they suspected the relationship between the style of furniture and its owner had never been perfectly truthful. The system proved entirely contemporarily erroneous, and further

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[30] *Taste and Power*, Auslander, 290.

[31] Ibid., 291.

[32] Ibib., 255.

deceived users because it supplied an inaccurate representation of the past. This was a significant problem for the U.A.M. because of their desire to be impartial and honest with the public. Their desire for objectivity and objective beauty could not be reconcile with the overt sentimentality that resulted from these past shapes and designs.

Although it was recent, the Belle Époque era was commonly glorified during the interwar period. This was partly due to government involvement during the First World War, which credited much of their success to their unified home front. No other allied citizens gave up as many liberal freedoms as the French did. Mail, media, and art of any type were censored for the purpose of maintaining a high morale on both fronts. This same approach, to a lesser extent, was continued following the war as the government attempted to mobilize their unified citizens into reestablishing the romanticized pre-war France they remembered, paired with the convenience of new technologies.

The state was interested in solidifying the nation with the help of the decorative arts because they believed that crafting a unified nation would give them security during an incredibly tumultuous time: Auslander writes, "Underlying the notion of nation, moreover, was the problematic fantasy of homogeneity. The French state would be secure if all its citizens became culturally French."[33] The pride and victory that resulted from being on the winning side of World War I made creating solidarity easier and elevated the home value of "Frenchness," since it was to the entire nation that success was attributed.[34] The romanticized Belle Époque was encouraged as the single identity—but the reality was that the world that had changed so radically since that time that the

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[33] Auslander, *Taste and Power,* 410.

[34] Kedward, *France and the French,* 112.

"Frenchness" encouraged by the government little matched the new realities of industry and urbanism.

Regardless, Raymond Poincaré returned to office in 1928 and quickly "re-created confidence in the franc, with a government of 'national union' to signify his own mix of secular and nationalist republicanism. Aged sixty-six, his reputation as the architect of the *union sacrée* was underpinned by his bearing as an archetypal wise old man with his white goatee beard and aloof manner."[35] Relying on monarchically inspired ornament encouraged this false unity arranged by Poincaré. The U.A.M. received criticism for not participating in this culture of ornament, believing their rational furniture would save France better than the *Union Sacrée* could. They were often accused of designing with the style of ocean liners (*style Paquebot)* or hospitals (*style Clinique*) because of their austerity and value of functionality. Although these labels were intended with pejoratively, the U.A.M. embraced them.

Style Paquebot, Style Clinique

The extant photographs of the *Salon de Musique* highlight the parallels identified by critics between the U.A.M. design aesthetic and the style of ocean liners and medical clinics. Both of these remarks concerned their furniture's marked lack of historicist ornament, and in each case the U.A.M. identified the misconceptions of the critiques and used the opportunity to articulate their position on living in the modern city.

Because Herbst designed his music room as an interior within the urban environment, Spaces on liners and Herbst's *Salon de Musique* shared necessitated space

[35] Ibid., 136.

restrictions, a large population of people, and concerns about hygiene and health in living quarters. Although liners were certainly enjoyed by the upper-class passengers as a time of leisure, these ships had a fundamental function to get passengers and cargo from one side of an ocean to another unharmed. Similarly, the *Chaises Sandows* had a fundamental purpose—to provide humans with a comfortable sitting experience. This was important to Herbst, who used objects that precisely accomplished their fundamental purpose in every type of room, regardless of the room's historical formality and the soberness of the object.

The U.A.M. celebrated this negatively intended comparison to ocean liners and explicitly responded to it in their manifesto of 1934. They addressed this accusation by first reminding readers that contemporary ocean liners were designed to look like palace interiors covered with gold and historicist ornament. Secondly, they responded to the intended insult with glee because they did in fact find beauty in the ocean liners of the past. They described, "Bravo for the liner style if it teaches us to furnish gaily, cleanly and simply a room ten meters square rather than a jumble or bric-a-brac where one cannot move, but enlarged because it is arranged in order and illuminated because it is clear and united."[36] The U.A.M.'s manifesto included a similar response concerning "clinical style."

The accusation of a "clinical style" indicated that their interiors were cold, sterile, and unlivable. Again, the U.A.M. corrected their definition of the epithet and took it as a compliment. They pointed out that there is no consistent "clinical style" because there is great variation in hospital buildings; castles are often converted into hospitals while

[36] l'Union des artists modernes, *Pour l'art modern*, 15

others embody the vernacular architecture of different regions. Therefore, no consistent visual style existed between hospitals. Instead, the very spaciousness and sparseness of this style was understood by the U.A.M. as the answer to the problem of city apartments—small, unhealthy spaces, especially those of the working class or "public," which was their term of choice. These clean, uncluttered furniture objects were the modern art that provided psychological repose for their users, an important quality of furniture when considering the fear the modern city had created.

Thus the *Chaises Sandows* provided an answer: comfort in a hygienic way that occupied little space. This was in comparison to the profusion of chairs commonly built from wood, cloth and stuffing—all three materials that collect and harbor dust and require significantly more space to provide an acceptable level of relief. The U.A.M. detested each of those things, proclaiming themselves to be against anything their grandmother would own. Rather, the *Chaises Sandows* represented comfort aligned with the U.A.M.'s greater social principles and contemporary aesthetic restraints. Herbst wrote,

> We can no longer live amid bric-à-brac. We should clear out—de-furnish. We find ourselves, furthermore, before an obligation arising from a sort of conflict between the development of civilization and economic evolutions; our need for comfort has grown but the space we have at our disposal has decreased. We no longer possess the right, nor the means, to waste space for purely decorative effects. Luxurious great halls already belong to the past; the installation of small rooms is the specifically modern problem.[37]

The comfort afforded by the sandows provided rest to its sitter within a smaller space, which was its beauty.

[37] Herbst, *Interior Decoration and its Techniques*. Translated by Delaporte in *Herbst,* 194.

Herbst fulfilled these requirements for the beautiful in his *Salon de Musique* display. Being multi-purpose, the cabinet set against the visitor's left wall also occupied a minimal amount of space. Tall and shallow, it lengthened toward the back of the room with three cabinet doors, the exterior two with round nickel-plated knobs each placed on the exterior corners. The center of the three doors had four pipes attached vertically with bolts. Although extant photos show it only with its doors closed, Herbst's similar cabinets can be seen open and contain only storage designed to hold specific items, such as records, books, and serving tools for mixed drinks.

Indeed, Herbst looked forward to the day when furniture no longer existed and buildings incorporated furniture into their structure: "Fitted cupboards with swivel or sliding doors. *This* is what Interior Architecture is. The whole organization forms a unit with the building and has nothing to do with pure decoration. What is the aim? Health for one's family avoiding contamination. No more moldings or reliefs likely to trap dust. Air, color, and gaiety."[38]

The U.A.M. put forth heavy accusations against ornament. Of course, the U.A.M. was not the first to challenge it; Henry Van de Velde, Loos, the Deutsche Werkbund, and even parts of the Bauhaus worked against ornament, some of them since the 19th century. However, these were all German efforts. The U.A.M. was the first large effort of decorative artists to oppose this tenant of design in France and maintained their "Frenchness." Moreover, they embraced and assiduously defended mass production—a position unforgivable by many of the French. This was necessary, however, because mass production was a contemporary development and allowed for financial accessibility—the

[38] Herbst, *Interior Decoration and its Techniques*. Translated by Delaporte in *Herbst,* 194.

second of the four U.A.M. requirements of *beautiful* art. As their 1934 manifesto and exhibition in the Galerie de la Renaissance would demonstrate, the U.A.M. relied on redefining key terms to explain their art as only the contemporary reformation of the current outdated French aesthetic traditions.

CHAPTER III

1934 THE U.A.M. EXHIBITION: MASS-PRODUCED FRENCH ART

Along with the continuous line of demonstrations held at the Place de la Concorde during the riotous year of 1934, the U.A.M. protested the right-wing government through texts and exhibitions. Their fourth annual exhibition opened that May at 11 Rue Royal, the address of La Galerie de la Renaissance, a gallery which was at the heart of this violent quarter and only steps from the meeting place of the Assemblée Nationale.[39] It was here, within an 18th century neo-classical building, that the U.A.M. simultaneously released their first manifesto, *Pour l'art moderne*, which proclaimed their objects beautiful French art.

The U.A.M. chose a location so central to the state, government, and cultural history of France in order to simultaneously establish legitimacy for their group as artists and challenge popular notions of "Frenchness." Though their objects were receiving epithets of "Germanic" and "Protestant," the U.A.M. proclaimed them more French than the historicist furniture being handcrafted within the Société des Artist Décorateurs. This paradox of mass-produced steel chairs being identified as fine French art was only possible through a redefining of core concepts, including *tradition*, *French*, and *beauty*. These ideas were fully explained in the manifesto and other texts by Herbst. During 1934, U.A.M.'s primary goal was to provide a reasonable explanation of how these apparently

[39] U.A.M. held exhibitions 1930, 1931, 1932, and 1934. Otherwise they exhibited collectively in other salons or international exhibitions.

German, mundane objects – including the *Chaises Sandows*—were actually pieces of beautiful French art when created by U.A.M. members.

A Crucial Location

Situated between La Madeline and La Place de la Concorde and just across the Seine from the Assemblée Nationale at La Palais Bourbon, La Galerie de la Renaissance is surrounded by monumental buildings of the state which represent a rich cultural heritage and long tradition of power in France. La Madeline was built by Napoleon in 1806 as a memorial to the great army, and was named La Temple de la Gloire de la Grande Armée. It was designed to resemble La Maison Carrée in Nîmes, one of the oldest standing Roman temples on French land, its origin proclaimed as such by its Corinthian columns and grand pediment. It was claimed by the Roman Catholic Church in 1842, adding yet another layer of French tradition.

On the other side of the Seine, across the Pont de la Concorde, La Palais Bourbon mirrors La Madaline with a facade that equally resembles a Roman temple. The grand portico was added to the Italianate palace in 1806-08 by the architect Bernard Poyet, again by the directive of Napoleon. The place additionally contains the *Luxor Obelisk* and *Fountains de la Concorde*, and has views of the *Tour Eiffel* and the Tuileries of the Palais du Louvre. The architecture reflects the historical importance of the site, the Place de la Concorde having hosted a number of nationally important events, including the guillotine during the Reign of Terror and, most recently for U.A.M., the events of February 6th, 1934.

On February 6th of 1934, Paris experienced its bloodiest night of political violence since the commune of 1871. Demonstrators from the political right protested the Radical Eduard Daladier and expressed their resentment against the parliamentary regime itself. Daladiers was the fifth Président du Conseil[40] in twenty months, having arrived on the tails of the Stavisky affair, which had caused hit predecessor to step down.[41] His term also coincided with the hardest year of the depression. Police and mounted guards blocked the bridge between Place de la Concorde and Palais Burbon but the place filled with crowds who began attacking the barricade. Temporary barricades were destroyed and the law enforcement panicked as the crowds rushed at them. They fired. There were 15 deaths with 1,435 wounded.[42] This was the first time since 1870 that the government had been brought down by pressure from the street.

The Exhibition inside *la Galerie de la Renaissance*

Inside the gallery, visitors found a very different looking revolution. Extant photos taken by Templier show the gallery's three rooms filled with architectural drawings, models, sculptures, paintings, textiles, books and furniture [Fig. 7]. They were

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[40] Président du Conseil is a common abbreviation of Président du Conseil des Ministres. This position is head of government and cabinet of France. The title changed to Premier minister français in the fifth republic. The head of state holds the title of President of France, who is elected by the public for five-year terms.

[41] Friguglietti and Kennedy, The shaping of modern France. The Stavisky affair was a French financial scandal involving the conman Alexandre Stavisky (1888-1934) and members of the political elite. Stavisky made a luxurious living selling worthless bonds backed by glass jewelry until he was eventually discovered in 1927. He was called to trial for the first time that year, but the trial was repetitively postponed until 1933. The scandal was kept quiet during these years and he was released on bail 19 times. Faced with exposure in December 1933, he fled and was found a month later by police. Controversy surrounded his death, which was greatly debated as either a suicide or murder by a policeman to cover up the secrets Stravisky held of those in the government. It became an incredibly public affair after his death.

[42] Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, 2.

all formed in U.A.M.'s functional aesthetic, a manifestation of the collective interest in smooth surfaces, abstracted shapes, and new technologies. While some furniture was placed in ensemble formations, pieces were primarily displayed individually. There was a general feeling of disorganization within the space, mainly because these displays were largely placed along the edge of the building's interior structure. This style of irregular arrangement was proposed by Francis Jourdain as a sort of 'bazaar,' an exhibition strategy that he been proposing for over twenty years. Over the course of U.A.M.'s exhibitions, their organization became increasingly haphazard because of his influence. The gallery included three large rectangular spaces connected by large open doorways, visually condensing the spaces into one another.

Two grids of photographs depicting interior and exterior architecture in sober white frames hung on the white walls; models of structures sat on minimally ornamented tables with furniture, sculptures and textiles interspersed. The first grid of photos included three depicting theater interiors and three photos of brightly lit signs on their exterior. The second grid of photographs showed streamlined, reinforced concrete buildings surrounded by elements of nature. The building models in the room echoed those in the photographs: smooth lines, large walls of glass and geometric structural forms. Although not identified, a model of the U.A.M. pavilion for the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne can be seen sitting on the dark bodied desk designed by Robert Lallemant. This desk was placed on a platform in the center of the room next to a second platform, on which sat two *Chaises Sandows* and a set of tubular steel and wood nesting tables, also designed by Herbst.

These two *Chaises Sandows* [Fig. 8] were a reiteration as those in the *Salon de Musique*. They had parallel pipes that created both the back and seat frame with a single, fluid curve. However, these sandows were bright blue and the frames slightly more compressed. They additionally included armrests that were formed with nine sandows that stretched between the back section of the frame and the over extended front leg pipes, which curve away from one another at the top. The chairs were placed perpendicular to one another, with the back of one against the armrest of its companion. The set of three nesting tables were placed near the chairs, but not in a useful position. This was not a functional arrangement for living; instead, it encouraged visitors to examine the furniture at every angle and appreciate their formal qualities as the manifestation and physical definition of beautiful modern art. Because they were created through mass production and lacked historicist ornament, the U.A.M. found them appropriate for this purpose. By elevating the *Chaises Sandows* on a platform as though they were sculptures, the U.A.M. implicitly proclaimed that they were pieces of modern art, the kind that would assist in bringing about the French utopia they desired.[43]

Preparations for U.A.M.'s exhibition at la Galerie de la Renaissance were taken as seriously as those for a military campaign. Herbst led the charge, using the military language of "attack," "counter attack," and "strategize." He assembled the most prominent U.A.M. members and sympathetic writers for a dinner in April of 1933 with

[43] This manner of display was balanced by a third *Chaise Sandows* that sat off of a platform, under the doorway between two of the gallery spaces. Above the chair hung two collages composed of photographs of *Chaises Sandows* in use. It was important to have this third chair sitting on the floor because it showed a second, often contradictory attribute: art and quotidian object. This dual nature would become more evident the following year at the *Salle de Gym* in Brussels.

the intention of discussing a response to the "attacks on modern art."[44] By this point, the U.A.M. army had grown consistently with about ten new members a year, nearly all of whom were born in Paris. Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanerette had joined in 1931 and "foreign participants" included Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy. After 1934, members would continue to exhibit together in other salons, but this would be their final U.A.M. exhibition until their pavilion at the 1937 Exposition Internationale in Paris. Because they knew this would be their last group exhibition, it was identified as paramount to establishing their presence and making their agenda known.

Paris in 1934 and the Need for a French Utopia

After the events of February 6th, 1934 continued to be a tumultuous year for the city of Paris, even in comparison to the rest of the generally chaotic years between the Wars. When the nearly fascist group *Ligues d'extrrême droite* succeeded in removing the Président du Conceil Daladiers and his government, he was replaced with Gaston Doumergue, one of France's most popular presidents.[45] It was his second time as Président du Conseil of France[46] and, although his term only lasted nine months, his policies further inflated the power of *ravanchism*, a deep-seeded hatred of Germany which served political efforts to solidify the nation.

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[44] Invitations, Archives U.A.M. expositions 1930-1953, Fonds Privée, Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Prominent individuals listed on the invitation as attending were Cheronnet, Clouzot, Cogniat, Galtier-Boissiere, Kunstier, Raynal, Rim, Salmon, Scize, Warnod. They assembled at la Biche, 37 Rue des Martyrs.

[45] He served as President 13 June 1924 – 13 June 1931, a shortened first term because his predecessor was associated.

[46] He served as Prime Minister 9 December 1913 – 9 June 1914.

These heightened social, economic, and political tensions, coupled with the lack of financial resources for the majority of France, caused the U.A.M. to see their project as a utopian one which would bring about social change. Until the Popular Front took power in 1936, U.A.M. was occupied with combating "Germanic" epithets and establishing their mass-produced objects as part of the tradition of French fine art. For this reason, they used their manifesto to declare the benefits of mass production by referencing great French thinkers in its support and explaining how it specifically fits into France's artistic tradition.[47]

In Defense of Mass Production and the Machine

The machine or, more specifically, the mass-production of steel objects offered U.A.M. numerous benefits. Firstly, it could facilitate the creation of large quantities of diverse and contemporarily appropriate art. Secondly, it offered the option of creating objects of quality at costs low enough for every citizen to purchase. Because their project depended heavily on the public consumption of beautiful objects and making space by removing harmful objects of historicist ornament, mass-production was essential. At every step, U.A.M. insulated their love of industrial production with a shroud of cultural and national protection. The benefits of the machine needed to speak to the concerns of the French public and, before anything else, they had to defend their objects as French art of the highest quality.

[47] L'Union des Artists Modernes, *Pour l'Art Moderne*, 14. My translation. Quotes came from Guyot, Clément Hanin, Maurras, Guastala, Cocteau, Alain and Louis Carré.

Firstly, they believed that this new form of technology was identical to other technologies that had developed throughout history and were accepted in general as proper art making tools. It was only an issue of quantity—not quality—that had changed:

> And yet, this history is only one of a series of continual adaptations to the progress of fabrication. It is this long sequence of disappearances of outdated processes and hatching of new techniques that needs to be considered and not lament over "the present accident." Like it or not, this is the future. Each progress has always has paid a social ransom. The boatmen and the stagecoach drivers stupidly destroy the first iron rails. More wisely, the cabbies become taxi drivers. But note, this is doing the trial of progress and not the critique of artistic evolution.[48]

This view that recent history was one of progress, that the replacement of tools contributed to the development of society translated to the understanding that for art to be beautiful, it needed to be consistently evolving. The machine was a tool in the hand of the artist, no different than the potter's wheel or those of the cabinetmaker.[49] Furthermore, the fact that it mass-produced pieces of art was not a concerned for U.A.M., who ascribed no value to individuality. They believed that if an object was beautiful, more should be made available. This proliferation made their designs more accessible simply because more of them existed, and it diminished production costs. Moreover, Herbst saw mass-production as an act of nature.

In an article entitled *Implications of Mass Production,* Herbst wrote in support of employing mass production because it resembled the processes of nature, using the origin

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[48] Ibid., 5. My translation.

[49] L'Union des Artists Modernes*, Pour l'Art Moderne*, 12. My translation: "Still better: this machine allowed a curious refreshment of creative values. If one presently completed less works of art, conversely, one would see a singular multiplication of the quantity of artists occupying the applied arts. Yesterday works of art were made sparingly of works "artistic", today artists, still more numerous, they do not distain to apply their talents to the creation of happy forms, which will be realized in series**.** We see an increase of aesthetic production. Is this not the true return to artistic production?"

to corroborate his position like so many architects did before him.[50] He extolled the benefits of sunlight, fresh air, and the bounty created by nature's powers of reproduction. "Mass production—an expression that seems to horrify so many—is prevalent in Nature, however. The most beautiful comparison one can make to mass production is perhaps the comparison with all the forms found in Nature." In the same way a tree produces a multitude of leaves, so too can industrial production create large quantities of chairs.[51]

Mass production was a critical topic within U.A.M.'s manifesto. The introduction includes a declaration that mass production would protect the public from the current system of class separation, because it was a process that could create high quality objects that were accessible to everyone because they were inexpensive. Having to create objects one by one using only small tools or hands restricts production and creates a hierarchy of access. This puts objects in a position to be capitalized on for their uniqueness, an imprudent luxury. This is the system of a past era, not appropriate for the 20th century with its active and accessible alternative technology. With the return of Alsace Lorraine after the war, there was no reason France could not catch up to the Germans in industrial production.

However, here exists a tension for the U.A.M. in their dependence of factory production: while the U.A.M. served purchasers with their manufactured objects, it was often at the expense of exploited factory employees. According to both the manifesto and

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[50] Delaporte-Idrissi , *René Herbst*, 132

[51] Herbst, *Interior Decoration and its Techniques*. Translated by Delaporte in *Herbst,* 194. Herbst also uses nature as an example for designing without ornament: "There should be no decoration at all. It's a frame and nothing else. Farewell to all the hideous accessories. Do not undermine the values of Nature—she always knows best."

Herbst, the U.A.M. worked for the "public," for "every class." This problem of exploitation was identified by the U.A.M., but they blamed the "ignorant and selfish" leaders who were abusing the system. U.A.M. saw an alternative to the destructive capabilities of industry. Herbst wrote, "Mass production offers to all (socially) a potential for comfort unimaginable without it. It is this search for improvements in human living standards that urges us forward to mass production…Only mass production allows for the hope of providing a healthy home for every family."[52] The U.A.M.'s solution to exploitation was wrapped up with their larger program. Their project was comprehensive and to create a utopia, the interiors of factories and those of factory owners would also have to change. When this occurred, factory owners would no longer feel the need for oppressing their employees.

Redefinitions of Artistic Concepts and Boundaries in *Pour l'art moderne*

As beneficial as mass production could be, it had to be received by the public as an accepted form of art creation to be affective. U.A.M. explained mass-production as art by mobilizing the terms *tradition* and *beauty*. Because they defined tradition as a principle of creativity inspired by the national "French essence" of the artist, they considered their project to be only a reformation of French art to produce social revolution. Therefore, mass production of steel furniture was the contemporary manifestation of the French tradition. The manifesto explained, "For us, tradition resides in the mind, that is to say it abides to a logical and human measure, constantly adaptable

[52] Herbst, *Implications of Mass-production context*

to techniques of progress and to social evolutions, and not in the letter, constituted by bric-a-brac of untranslatable forms, unusable and without generating virtues."[53]

Because the tradition of French art is "constantly adaptable to techniques of progress and to social evolutions and not in the letter," the U.A.M. saw no reason their mass-produced steel chairs could not be art because they were made by a new technology and dictated by contemporary social conditions. They argued that their function of sitting did not interfere with its position as art, not just the decorative arts. Therefore, U.A.M. supported equality between the arts and considered furniture and all "minor" arts no different than canonical art forms; this belief was central to their project. It was important to view both "applied" and "fine" art within the same category of worth because U.A.M. measured all art by its social capabilities—leaving no qualitative difference between painting and teapots. As the manifesto proclaims: "it is our opinion that mixing the minor and major arts is the first task of the new aesthetic. This seems to us especially easy because, despite appearances, art now finds her former position in the city and avid social interests have become mobile creations."[54] Art was now evaluated by the effects it has within the larger society.

This movement towards the breakdown of the hierarchy of art forms was evident in France before the 20th century. It gained a foothold in French exhibitions as early as 1902 when Frantz Jourdain convinced the Société des Artistes Français and Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts to show painters, sculptors, and artist-decorators in the same

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[53] L'Union des Artists Modernes, *Pour l'Art Modern*, 20. My translation.

[54] Ibid., 26. My translation.

exhibition. Outside of art societies, changes within commerce also altered the category of art, which had been dividing types of labor since the mid-19th century due to new technologies and demands. In the case of furniture, the conceptual laborer was given the title of "artist" and machines were employed to do the manual labor, removing both duties from the artisan. This type of separation between cerebral and manual increased in every sector as the culture of mass consumption rose and specialization was required to keep up with demands.[55] All design could now be considered artist-made because that which defined it as craft before was made the responsibility of the machine. The U.A.M. embraced the machine and found that it gave them access to new opportunities for equality and greater artistic production.

Société des Artistes Décorateurs's Opposition

Artists within the Société des Artistes Décorateurs were principally creating decadent Art Deco designs. Its leaders included René Guilleré, Hector Guimard, Eugène Gaillard, Eugène Grasset, Maurice Dufrêne, and Paul Follot. The group had distinct connections with the state, exemplified by the Minister d'État under Gaston Doumergue, André Tardieu, who presided over the S.A.D. between 1933 and 1939. Although their gold, mahogany, and velvet chairs, cabinets, and clocks reflected the ornate handiwork that had been present in France for so long and was the basis of their claim to tradition, the U.A.M. saw things differently.

[55] In *Taste and Power,* Auslander discusses the increasing separation of production as an element of the developing consumer culture. This separation would lead to the laborer's detachment from their work which would make capital the sole motivating force of production. It is worth considering how U.A.M.'s use of industrialized labor redeems or contributes to this process.

The designs that were being made by S.A.D. members were copies of varying levels of abstraction of past genius and unhelpful in modernity; therefore, they did not participate in the progression of traditional French design, according to the U.A.M. The S.A.D. chairs occupied an inappropriately large amount of space when considering the small size of many apartment of the city, and the ornament concealed dust. In contrast, U.A.M.'s designs were based on innovation: "Between the past and the future, we strive to continue a program that seems aptly suitable for all conditions of the times we live."[56] For this reason, repeating old forms and styles was discouraged by U.A.M, who warned, "fear nothing of eventual copies or of the possible concurrence if we know to put in our creations that inimitable *je ne sais quoi*—even in the most simple lines—which is to properly speak the national spirit. Fear everything, on the contrary, if French art continues to offer only copies of styles, where the repetition of decors permits."[57] The U.A.M. implies here that they, not the S.A.D. members, were the more French, because they followed the French tradition of progress and creativity in art while the S.A.D. only repeated no longer relevant ideas.

Beautiful Materials

This definition of tradition also applied to materials: just as there are no specific formal manifestations of tradition, there are no traditional materials. More options for materials became available with the advent of new production methods*;* Mass production encouraged the use of steel and allowed for greater experimentation with glass in

[56] L'Union des Artists Modernes, *Pour l'Art Moderne*, 30. My translation.

[57] Ibid., 26. My translation

architecture. Steel was restricted to use in patio or café furniture at this point in France, and was not allowed to pollute interior spaces of living that deserved wooded furniture. U.A.M. addressed the issue of materials in the last portion of their manifesto: "note well that there is no 'traditional material,' and we explain that there is only 'beautiful material'. There is not 'traditional material […]."[58] They continued to explain that even beautiful material is not explicitly or consistently wood; rather, beautiful material is that which is best suited for the function of the object it is used to create.[59]

This ardent desire to define their work as French, this reform and reliance on national equity, was primarily the U.A.M.'s attempt to avoid German associations, of which critics commonly accused them—not a surprising accusation, considering the lineage of tubular steel. Germanophobia had been a powerful social force in France since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, and was only exacerbated by the First World War. Following Allied victory, Germany was pronounced guilty for the preparation, provocation, and misconduct of the war.[60] During the war, tales of German brutality circulated unreservedly. The veracity of the worst of these rumors is still under suspicion,[61] but it is incontestable that Germany ignored Hague conventions and escalated war technologies. There were plenty of reports of German troops pillaging towns and seizing goods,[62] as well as treating the French citizens as prisoners of war.[63] No epithet

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[58] Ibid., 23. My translation

[59] Ibid., 23. My translation .

[60] Mitchell, *German History in France after 1870*, 96

[61] Kedward, *France and the French,* 66.

[62] Ibid., 88.

was as cutting as "German," no stereotype as easily believed. The discourse surrounding Germany during and after the war 'othered' the Germans and the German culture, which led to the French forming a very particular identification of themselves—French was that which was not German.

Because tubular steel was utilitarian by nature and was used first in Germany to make domestic furniture, French citizens identified tubular steel furniture as German and only German. When the Italian company Dalmine began manufacturing seamless steel tubes commercially in 1909, members of the Deutsche Werkbund identified the product's potential for its light weight, durability and flexibility. The material was also in keeping with Thonet's bentwood furniture. The technology was originally developed for bicycle production in 1885[64] and was successfully repurposed as a material for domestic furniture in 1924, when Mart Stam displayed his tubular steel cantilever chair prototype at the Werkbund annual exhibition. Following Stam came a long line of influential Werkbund and Bauhaus designers using the material, not least of which were Marcel Breuer's *Wassily Chair* (1925)[65] and Mies van der Rohe's *MR10* chair (1927) [Fig. 9, 10].

In addition and connected to epithets of "German" which their furniture received, the U.A.M. received criticism for its "Protestant" aesthetic and utilitarianism. Germany had remained a primarily Protestant nation since the Reformation in the 16th century,

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[63] In addition to documented atrocities, French historians inserted unconfirmed tales into textbooks after the war. By including the most extreme accounts of German cruelties, credible historians like Ernest Lavisse and Charles Andler legitimated possibly fictitious narratives for the French citizens.[63] The violent emotions felt toward Germany were increased by the teaching this version of of contemporary history until Second World War.

[64] "Bicycle – Historical Outline"

[65] Although it was of much debate, Stam sued Breuer for his claiming to design the first tubular steel chair. Stam eventually won the title of "First Cantilever Chair" and Breuer was given "First Tubular Steel Chair."

while France revived and struggled to maintain their Catholic legacy. Like ornament in art, Catholicism was used as an agent of national unity, and the U.A.M.'s adopting a program with values that seemingly mimicked those of Protestants was seen as a direct challenge to French values.

Beauty in Form

U.A.M. gave specific responses to these accusations with propositions of universal truths about style and beauty and set their work apart from sentimentality. They disputed the problem their critics had concerning their forms or techniques having originated from other nations. U.A.M. explained that the movement of ideas and styles in art was similar to the transplanting of exotic plants, and looked to the history of art to corroborate their position. Located near the beginning of *Pour l'art moderne*, a section called "Lessons from History" reads: "The transported spice plants, if they do not die, will not be long to acclimatize, lose their original character and succumb to the transformations that a new climate and a terrain impose. The history of art is a long list of examples of acclimations of this kind, to the following changes and influences."[66] Following this introduction they traced a connection from the "primitive Greeks" through the Assyrians to the Romans, and Byzantium as a "Greco-Roman-Asian" fusion and the mother of Russian, Scandinavian, Celtic, Lombard and Arab schools.

As correct or incorrect as these connections may be, there was a point to be made: "everything depends on the faculties of assimilation to each artistic essence. There is no

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[66] L'Union des Artists Modernes, *Pour l'Art Moderne*, 8. My translation.

degeneration, but fusion into a new national patrimony."[67] U.A.M. wanted to show that each nation had a specific "essence" that changed imported styles to make them there own. The French called it the *je ne sais quoi*. The art which was created when Henry IV's artisans trained in Flanders, when François I welcomed Italians to Fontainebleu Château, and when the 19th century French art succumbed to Anglo-Saxon Romanticism, all remained French because of the nation's "essence". And, in return, France exported "the gothic of l'Ile-de-France and the classicism of Versailles" and those nations who adopted the gothic produced their own national version of it. Therefore, the modern art of the U.A.M. remained French, regardless of other nations creating similar forms. In the same way that tradition was defined as a spirit or principle, so to was the quality of "Frenchness" seen to direct the ways in which foreign influences were absorbed and reused. Furthermore, they argued that because modern art created in France contains this "French essence," it maintains the prestige of France, just as the gothic and neo-classical styles before it. The fact that tubular steel furniture originated from Germany did not dictate its sole continued connection with that nation.

Just as they redefined style, they redefined beauty. The U.A.M. found beauty only within the unornamented, functional form. They considered their objects created without ornament to be entirely different than ornamented objects with their ornament removed. The manifesto corroborated this position by discussing the Venus de Milo and similarly popular sculptures of nearly nude women and dared readers to argue they would be more beautiful had the bodies been additionally covered. "For us, it is only on an ungracious and ugly body that a cloth can bring a correcting illusion, a travesty of superficial beauty;

[67] Ibid. My translation.

for us, a garment exists only to support humans: removed and empty, a dress, for example, is only a formless rag."[68]

These new forms were without the confusing quality of sentiment and were objectively beautiful for their proportion, function, and contemporaneity. The design of the chairs emphasized the nature of their materials; they are characterized by a general effect of lightness which is given by their thin appendages and an emphasis on negative space. Even after the 1930s, when many U.A.M. members returned to using wood, they maintained these visual qualities to use wood in a new and dynamic way. Perriand most notably accomplished this, by transferring the *B306 Chaise Longue* (1928) into bamboo in her *Chaise longue en bambou* (1941) [Fig. 11, 12].

The U.A.M. caused the definition of beauty to expand through insisting on their mass-produced objects being identified as beautiful French art, and they made room for the serious consideration of functionality as a potential criteria for art. If mass-produced steel furniture was in keeping with traditional French art and functionality was accepted as a measure of artistic merit, the level of functionality of their furniture could now affect judgments of its success. This would be the primary focus of Herbst, Perriand, Sognot, Jeanneret and Le Corbusier the following year, when U.A.M. members participated abroad in one of the French pavilions at the 1935 International Exhibition in Brussels.

[68] U.A.M., *Pour l'Art Modern*, 10. My translation.

CHAPTER IV

1935 BRUSSELS EXPOSITION: EQUIPMENT AS ART

The 1935 Exposition Universelle et Internationale *Bruxelles holds the unfortunate distinction of being one of the least attended European exhibition of the 19th century.*[69] *This lack of interest continues in current scholarship and, although it is certified by the Bureau International des Expositions, it is often left out of books tracing their history. Considering the financial depression and international violence Europe was experiencing during 1935 and the years preceding it, the underwhelming reception of the exhibition is of little surprise. Only 24 nations participated, 20 less than in the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne of Paris two years later and 20 less than the next exhibition held in Brussels in 1958. Furthermore, Brussels attracted less than 21 million visitors in 1935, 27 million less than the 1933 The Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago and 13 million less than Paris did in 1937. However, this lack of enthusiasm was not felt by the French, who contributed five buildings to the exposition. Indeed, more reviewers of their exhibits remarked on this astounding number than the contents of the buildings themselves.*[70]

From April 27th through November 6th, Brussels' Heysel Park set the stage for this exhibition. Joseph van Neck was the principle architect of the exposition and embraced the Art Deco style with his structures. Belgian painters Paul Devaux and René Magritte

[69] Mattie, *World's Fairs*, 167.

[70] Newspaper articles saved by Herbst, 1935, box 17, René Herbst Archives, Fonds Privée, Musée des Arts Décoratifs,

were celebrated throughout the exposition. Many of France's buildings echoed this Art Deco style, including the Hall of Honor and the exterior of the Industry Pavilion.[71] One building, however, hinted at a changing tide in France toward the modernism of the U.A.M.: the *Foyer de la Famille*.

Foyer de la Famille Français was a deliberate collaboration between members of the U.A.M. and the S.A.D., arranged and paid for by M. S. Huisman, director of l'École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts. It was intended to display how families in urban France were living, with an emphasis on their contemporary technology and lifestyle. The S.A.D. members Eugène Printz and Lucie Reneaudeau designed the rooms designated for the daughter and parents, respectively, in keeping with what was popularly considered 'feminine': historicist ornament, overstuffed chairs and the occasional floral pattern. The U.A.M. members Perriand, Louis Sognot, Kohlman and Herbst were responsible for the spaces dedicated to the young man in the family: his gymnasium, study, bedroom, sitting room, and bathroom.[72]

These four rooms dedicated to the male child of the four-member family were often referred to as *l'Appartement pour le jeune homme*. This unofficial title has been occasionally been misunderstood as an 'apartment for a young man,' as though it were an individual living situation, though they were simply the rooms of a house dedicated to the son.[73] This is a serious error, as scholars of Léger and Perriand have taken this

[71] The abundance of buildings is perhaps due to the historical French love of international exhibitions. More likely, it was one of few opportunities for the government in power to proclaim their version of the nation.

[72] Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia*, 96

[73] Publications that discuss the individual living condition instead of a set of rooms inside a family home include the catalogue for *Fernand Léger* at The Museum of Moddern Art, by Carolyn Lancher, and most of

"apartment" to represent a living condition approved of by the commissioning government. Instead, it is important to realize that the government of France was still fervently encouraging the creation of family units and supporting an increase in the rate of childbirth in every way possible. This hegemony of the family is evident here, and should be noted. Moreover, it is a unit that Herbst protects—often militantly—as he discusses the needs of the family more than the needs of the individual.

Inside *l'Appartement pour le jeune homme*, visitors found two *Chaises Sandows* sitting inside the *Salle de Gym* underneath a large mural by Léger entitled *Sports* [Fig. 13-15]. Having just been established in 1934 as fine French art, the *Chaise Sandows* became concurrently the very definition of *equipment* in this exhibition, as they sat next to and reflected in appearance the rowing machine and a pile of dumbbells. The term equipment was popular with both Herbst and Le Corbusier. Unlike Le Corbusier's separation between equipment and art, however, the U.A.M. at large still considered equipment to be art because they believed its high functionality added to its beauty.[74] This beauty of functionality can be further understood by considering Eugen Sandow, the father of modern body building and namesake of the *Chaises Sandows*, as well as the

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Charlotte Perriand scholarship, including texts published by the Centre Pompidou. Golan in *Modernity and Nostalgia* acknowledges its position within *Foyer de la Famille*, but goes on to discuss the space as "The House for a Young Man."

[74] This separation can be seen in *Decorative Art of Today*, in which he explains his ideas of type-objects, type-needs, and all of the decorative arts as connected to architecture. It is an important synthesis of his ideas, as Nancy Troy wrote in her review of the book: "The Decorative Art of Today advances an argument about modern, industrial culture that is analogous to those that inform the architect's better known books of the period, Vers une Architecture and Urbanisme. The present volume those present complements those publications and extends their basic arguments into the realm of decorative art and industrial design. From this perspective, it is indeed surprising that Le Corbusier's attitude to decorative art has not been the subject of more intense study, if only because it impinges quite directly upon our understanding of his parallel contributions in the fields of architecture and urbanism."

U.A.M.'s continued insistence that the *Chaise Sandows* was a piece of fine art (since the mural by an established artist directly related to the other utilitarian pieces in the room, including the chair).

L'Appartement pour le jeune homme was created in a rectangular space of the building and divided with temporary walls, as can be seen in extant photos—a cube, the very shape of which "is synonymous with health."[75] The *Salle de Gym* was a temporally sectioned rectangle in one corner of the structural space. It was separated from the bathroom and bedroom on its right with large sliding wooden doors and separated from the study below with a black net, further visually divided by a large shelving unit in the study. The gym's two solid walls were covered on the bottom half with dark, washable linoleum and a barre attached at hip-height running horizontally across both. The first doorway connected the gym to a wide austere hallway containing two elongated leafy plants and a prototype Chaise Sandows. The second door connected the gym to the small bathroom containing a round shower fixture. Above the paneling on the rear wall, Léger painted *Sports*, which was characterized by bright colors and vague athletic shapes echoing the forms of the equipment inside the physical space.

Léger had been a member of the U.A.M. for five years, one of the few painters in the group. He was trained as a draftsman during his early military service in the engineer corps and worked in an architecture office after moving to Paris in 1900. He applied without success to the École des Beaux Arts and alternatively participated as a "free student" in the studios of Gérôme and Gabriel Ferrier. His painting career began like

[75] Goguel, *René Herbst*, 193

most students of his era, in the Impressionist style. He respectfully changed his approach in response to modernity, stating, "I felt that the period of the Impressionists had been intrinsically melodious, while my own was no longer so…"[76] Léger found forms appropriate to his era in Cubism when in 1910 he came into direct contact with Cubist paintings at Daniel Kahnweiler's gallery, which was showing works by Picasso and Braque.

Léger began interacting with other future U.A.M. members when he met Joseph Csaky in 1909 after moving to Montparnasse. He was mobilized in August of 1914 during WWI and fought in the French Army on the front lines at Argonne, an experience that assisted in inducing his "mechanical" phase exemplified by his 1918 *Dans L'Usine* [Fig. 16]. He met Le Corbusier in 1920 and through him Amédée Ozenfant, the primary initiator of the Purism. Léger continued to develop this style on canvas, but as he became more involved with leftist political groups, his mural work increased. He made three trips between Paris and the Soviet Union between 1928 and 1930 and embraced the Soviet films shown in Paris. As a member of the French Communist Party, he gave lectures at the Musée de du Soir and Maison de la Cutlure.[77]

Sports was created with bright, primary colors and aligned horizontally, consuming the entire width of the thirteen-foot wide wall [Fig. 17]. The painting depicts various types of athletic tools, schematic human participants, and amorphous shapes. A navy-blue nebulous shape defined by undulating lines layers over almost the entire consistently yellow background. This blue shape is covered with faded white spots and an

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[76] Di Francia, *Fernand Léger*, 3.

[77] Wilson, *Fernand Léger: art and politics*, 57.

irregularly shaped hole, making the yellow background visible as though it were a molecular structure. The composition is split vertically into two sections by what looks like a large cream colored fence post with several thinner railings protruding from it, one on the left and three on the right, with a final railing leaning up against the large post.[78] Each component of this central arrangement is defined by colors, either coral or evergreen, instead of black shading.

The left side of the painting contains a perfectly round, cream colored ball that matches the fence, although it is shaded in a more typical black, resembling the basketballs that sat on the floor of the exhibition room. Four similarly colored and shaded arms with defined hands reach up toward the ball, smooth without muscular and little joint definition. They mimic the anonymity of the three faceless figures on the right side of the pictorial field, which are defined by a hard black outline and only visible from just below their shoulder. They are stacked one after another and seen from a diagonal angle as through, like the Chaises Sandows, they were produced in a series. A barbell with attached weights floats above their heads, which was a popular piece of gym equipment used in the 1930s.

The most compelling portion of the painting is the object wrapped around the fence, a sandow. This long elastic cord with a hand ring at its terminus, which twirls around the railings, is a representation of the same exercise tool Herbst referred to in his Chaises Sandows chairs. In addition, its shape reflected the gymnastic rings also physically hanging in the gym. As Karin von Maur writes, “The picture is a forceful

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[78] This odd shape also resembles a climbing structure that Charlotte Perriand sketched into her own *Salle de Gym* in 1928. See figure 18.

emblem of sport, right in contrasts, in which the joy of movement (playing ball) combines with collective discipline (the team of gymnasts)."[79] Indeed, the contrasts in Léger's painting, the gym's connection to the study, and this interweaving of art, sport, joy and discipline mark Herbst's *Salle de Gym* as a location for the 'New Man,' and an answer to the problems of modernity.

The gym contained pairs of everything that modern city dwellers needed to keep their bodies physically and psychologically fit: boxing gloves, dumbbells, Indian clubs, medicine balls, and *Chaises Sandows*. The multiples of each object imply that athletic endeavors were a community activity, making the gym a place of social meeting like the *Salon de Musique*. It also featured a spring bag to be used with the boxing-gloves and a sport mat designed by Hélène Henry with a rowing machine placed on its center. These were next to a line of hanging apparatuses including gymnastic rings, a climbing rope and a swinging bar.

The two *Chaises Sandows* featured in the exhibit, which were displayed sitting against the back wall underneath *Sports,* became the most common version of chairs. They were the simplest in the series, with upright front legs, a level seat, and bright yellow sandows. The back legs began at the rear of the seat and extend slightly away from one another as they reach the floor, no longer a continuous pipe between legs and back supports. Unlike the unbroken rhythm of sandows on the chairs in previous exhibitions, there are only six across the upper portion of the back and twenty to form the seat, an arrangement which added significantly more negative space to the object. These

[79] Von Maur, *Rhythm and the Cult of the Body*, 33 of *Fernand Léger: the later years*

are also without armrests. The gym also included tubular steel side table and lounge chair.

Like all *Chaises Sandows*, these were manufactured at René Herbst's R-H Établissements. The other metal objects in the room were produced by Forges de Commentry.[80]

The *Chaises Sandows*, exercise apparatuses, and the glass blocks above the doorway were all products of series manufacturing. Each component represented the contemporary technology that the U.A.M. considered so important to the modern family's way of life.[81] These were all familiar products reinvented with new production methods and used in new ways as a result.[82] Much of this mass-produced material was

[80] The metal objects in the *Salle de Gym* represented an exponentially growing industry in France. Commentry is a town in the department of Allier, eight kilometers from the geographical center of France. Primarily an agrarian economy until the 19th century, it became a center of industry centered around the coalfield located within its jurisdiction, which was over 21 kilometers square. The mining and forging industries are so important to this town that their heraldic coat of arms contains the silhouettes of an anvil, a crossed pick and mallet, and a miner's lamp. The use of metal in the *Salle de Gym* was very typical for France at this time, only rivaled by the same industry in Alsace Lorrain. Following World War II, Commetry became a center of chemical industry as well. It is perhaps better remembered as a stronghold of socialist ideas.

[81] Goguel, Solange *René Herbst*, 71

[82] The concept of a hollow glass block used as a building material is originally attributed to a French engineer, Gustave Flaconnier, who received the patent in 1886. Early blocks were either hand blown or cast into molds and were frequently used in the walls and ceilings of factories in Western Europe because they were translucent without being transparent, which allowed interiors to receive natural light without causing a distraction to workers. However, they were structurally precarious until the early 1930s when a new technique was developed to produce more reliable blocks. With this new method, two molded glass halves were melted together at only the seams at such a high temperature and pressure that the hollow center became air tight. These more advanced blocks were used in ships as well as grounded structures because they retained privacy, allowed light into interiors, and provided good noise and thermal insulation. With the more frequent use of reinforced concrete came greater and more diverse uses for these glass blocks. Pierre Chareau's *Maison de Verre* demonstrated just how extensively glass blocks could be used.

used in Salle de Gym, including the additional table and chaise sitting in the corner, both of which were constructed with tubular steal.[83]

Representation of Gyms by the U.A.M. Members

This use of mass production significantly separated the appearance of *Salle de Gym* from previous physical culture designs, which had become a more frequent concern since the 1920s. The very presence of these spaces at exhibitions demonstrates a trend of concern for the health and hygiene of the individual. Furthermore, the frequent proximity of study spaces to athletic spaces demonstrated who the new "Modern Man" was: a man who is intelligent and athletic in an inseparable manner. Perriand's sketches of *Salle de culture physique* c. 1928 depict a rather sparse space that contains only a bulls eye, monkey bars, a stool, and a vertical climbing apparatus [Fig. 18]. In a second drawing, the room is shown as directly connected to a work or study space [Fig. 19]. Gabriel Guévékian also sketched a bare exercise room that year [Fig. 20] as did Pierre Chareau and Robert Mallet-Stevens [Fig. 21]. This concern can partially account for the large number of bathroom sketches and exhibitions shown around this same time by both the U.A.M. and the S.A.D., further represented even in art journals.

Dr. Winter, a physician and friend of Le Corbusier, frequently wrote articles for *l'Ésprit Nouveau* on 'The New Body': "The athlete's euphoria is pervading the world, and its effect will be immense. Painters, sculptors, poets: you will all feel it. A new artist

[83] The table with a tubular steel frame and two wood planes had appeared in many previous exhibitions since 1929 and had become a favorite table of Herbst. Conversely, the lounge chair was an abnormality because it used cloth stretched between the frame which was attached with rope instead of sandows to keep it taut. For all the objects in the room, only the rug and painting were not mass-produced. Even the bathroom contained a shower with mass produced parts, one that resembled the shower Herbst designed the previous year for the *Salon de Paquebot*.

is about to be born. He is born already creating its synthesis… The body will reappear, naked in the sun, showered, muscular, supple…It adumbrates the new form, and that form will be beautiful."[84] A second article by Dr. Winter proclaimed the beautifying affect of physical training, as well as its ability to transform our whole way of life and social structure: "Sport brings an element of order into life…It demands the demolition of outworn framework. It introduces the law of balance which governs work and repose. It imparts precision and coordination to our movements. It trains us in quick reaction. It gives the time factor its fitting place in modern life."[85]

Dr. Winter continued writing for Le Corbusier after *L'Ésprit Nouveau* in *Plans, Préludes,* and *L'Homme reel,* all journals published in the 1930s.[86] He continued to write about the inherent connection between the mind and the body and the necessity of physical exercise for the urban dweller. The citizen needed equipment, not furniture, to serve both the mind and the body. The U.A.M. members increasingly used this term equipment as a more appropriate conceptualization for the objects they were designing. This term has an inherent purposefulness and strong connections to machinery and exercise; pieces of equipment are objects designed for humans to use to accomplish tasks.

For both Le Corbusier and U.A.M., equipment was intended to be anonymous and as quiet as a "self effacing servant."[87] It was to serve its users' needs without drawing attention to itself with ornament; it should be inconspicuous. The U.A.M. valued its

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[84] Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia*, 99.

[85] Serota, L*éger the later years*, 34

[86] Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia*, 99

[87] Le Corbusier, *Decorative Art of Today*, xxiii

ability to support the daily life of a family and believed that a utopia would be born when everyone employed these highly functional objects. Comfort was considered a necessary criteria for functional objects because it provided psychological repose. Ultimately, the U.A.M. considered comfort a servant of reason and categorized it ergonomically, no longer as a weak and feminine characteristic but imperative to the health of city dwellers who sit for a significant portion of the day. Nevertheless, the U.A.M. still considered this equipment to be art, which status was not to be changed by an object's location or its emphasized functionality. Indeed, the chairs' high functionality added to its beauty as art. This motto was held sacred to the U.A.M.: "Forms are useful (and beautiful) when they satisfy the requirements of their materials and the aspirations of the mind."[88] Léger's mural *Sports* dominating *Salle de Gym* manifested this elevation of the functional object through its content and style. Several versions of this painting would appear in later U.A.M. exhibitions, due to a secure relationship and shared core artists between the U.A.M. and the Purist movement following 1931.

Purism

Like the U.A.M. and the conglomeration of reformist art movements that came after the war, the Purists attempted to address the expedient changes it caused.[89] "The War is over, everything organizes, everything is clarified and purified; factories rise

[88] This paralleled the motto the Musée des Arts Décoratifs had adopted at its foundation—"the beautiful in the useful."

[89] Di Francia, *Fernand Léger*, 71. Definitions of Purism range from a direct amplification of Cubism to one of many of Cubism's offspring that was "essentially a demand for an art which was both intellectual and humanistic," although the Purists themselves spent the first two years arguing for its independence.

already, nothing remains as it was before the War," read the opening lines to *Après le Cubisme,* the manifesto Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant wrote in 1918, in which they formulated the precepts of this new movement. Purism valued order, reason, and the search for a universal and transmittable plastic language. It was dedicated to creating art of and for its time. In her book on Ozenfant, Susan Ball writes,

> They [Jeanneret and Ozenfant] wanted Purism to be more than just a type of painting. It embodied an entire attitude toward life. It insisted on geometric order and clarity associated with urban industrial technology (the present); it insisted equally on the classical ideals of harmony, order, and proportion (the past)… the Purists combined tradition and the present…and they skillfully adapted the vocabularies of both post-war reconstruction and nineteenth century social Darwinism to the aesthetics of the machine age.[90]

This engendered depictions of objects in their 'invariable and generalized' appearance, not firmly set in the Cartesian grid. Moreover, these objects were identified by their function "In order to depict these objects in all their invariability and generality, they are represented as 'object-types,' just as Le Corbusier would use the language of type-objects. "They argued that the plastic language is universal because of man's fundamental and constant need for order. It is the role of the artist, among others, to establish or reveal the standard plastic language."[91]

As was common practice in most modern movements, the Purists established a journal dedicated to the issues they were considering. For Purism, this was Le Corbusier and Ozenfant's *l'Ésprit Nouveau*. Ozenfant insisted that a painting was "a machine to move one's emotions," Paul Valéry stated that "a book was a machine to read from," and

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[90] Ball, *Ozenfant and purism*, 72

[91] Ibid., 73

for Le Corbusier, a house was a machine for living.[92] Following the groups official disbanding 1925, Ozenfant went to New York to continue developing an individual style and Le Corbusier focused on issues of architecture and urbanism (in the broadest sense of their definitions) in Paris, eventually bringing him into the U.A.M.

It is here that Le Corbusier's ideas should be situated within the U.A.M., for the primary disagreement between the two resides in the relationship between equipment and art. Le Corbusier became an active member of the U.A.M. in 1931 after becoming a French citizen in 1930, joining his atelier's furniture designer Perriand who had assisted with the group's establishment. Le Corbusier and Herbst shared membership in other groups outside of the U.A.M., were both founding members of the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), and often displayed together in ensembles at various Salon d'Automne. Like the U.A.M., Le Corbusier valued utility, contemporaneity and transportation technology.

Le Corbusier comprehensively explained his position regarding the decorative arts in 1925 with his publication of *L'Art Décoratif d'Aujourd'hui*, a book primarily comprised of slightly edited articles that he had previously written for the journal *L'Ésprit Nouveau,* which had been published as a commentary to the Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes. The book is organized in the same style as *Toward an Architecture* and argues with both text and images that unornamented, mass produced type-objects are the answer to contemporary conditions. He argues for tools instead of furniture, furniture as tools that have nothing to do with art: "If decorative art has no reason to exist, tools on the other hand do exist, and there exists

[92] Di Francia, *Fernand Léger*, 71

also architecture and the work of art. A tool, something that gives service, a servant, a menial. One single requirement: that it serves well. Architecture is a construct of the mind which gives material form to the sum consciousness of its age…"[93] Although his tools function inside architecture, they are not on the same hierarchy of art. For Le Corbusier, furniture is "menial slave," "human-limb objects" to be thrown out when used up. He rejects the notion of attachment or sentimentality toward these objects of furniture or light fixtures that would garner placing ornament on them. Their visual simplicity was not beauty but necessity to be considered for its service alone.

Eugen Sandow

Herbst's love of function's beauty is best represented in his choice of naming the Chaise Sandows after the body builder who sold elastic exercise tools, Eugen Sandow (1867-1925).[94] As art and artist, product and producer, Sandow shared numerous parallels with Herbst and his *Chaises Sandows*, not the least of these were their aesthetics of functionality, their concern for public health, and the criticism received due to their Germanic associations in the public mind. They were also mutually occupied with reason, healthy civilization, and living in small spaces.

Sandow could lift pianos and automobiles daily—twice daily when he had multiple performances. Between 1889 and the early 1920s, he astonished his audiences in Europe and America with rippling muscles and "the grace that could only come from

[93] Le Corbusier, *Decorative Art of Today*, xiv

[94] He was born Friedrich Wilhelm Müller

power."[95] After all this, he sold the tools to his public for them to do the same. He primarily sold mass-produced spring dumbbells for grip strength and rubber straps for tension muscle training, known as Sandows. These were "civilized" exercise tools, since they could be used inside an apartment bathroom, and the routines were "reasonable": high repetitions and light resistance. Compared to the loud, heavy, and low repetition exercises popular at the time, Sandow's system was surprising and contemporary. Furthermore, they were marketed to both genders and every class, although he often exploited popular stereotypes to do so. Photographs of Sandow circulated, encouraging people to become as high functioning as he was.

He also published instruction books in English on exercise like *Strength and How to Obtain It*. This, his most popular book, covered as many topics as the U.A.M. did. The chapters included "How to Exercise," "The Secret of the Cold Bath," and "Nutritive Qualities of Foods." The remainder of the book demonstrates specific exercise movements, explains how to quantify and measure progress so that the reader can keep a logical account of their work, and an account of his professional career, so as to set an example. Finally, the center of the book contains "Letters from Pupils" which outlining the success of his students with accompanying photographs. Apart from the insights this book provides into the *Chaise Sandows*, it is notably one of the first in the long line of exercise books that fill contemporary bookstore shelves.

In the introduction to Sandow's book, the mind/body connection is again evident: "Hundreds of letters reach me daily, asking "Can I become strong?" Yes; you can all

[95] Weller, *The Perfect Man*, 194

become strong if you have the will and use it in the right direction. But, in the first place, you must learn to exercise your mind. This first of all lessons in physical training is of the utmost importance. For on it the whole of my system depends."[96] The remainder of the introduction continues this line of argument by explaining how impossible it is to develop muscles when the exerciser's mind is not engaged in every movement.

The images in the book that follow the introduction have bearing on the *Salle de gym* and *Sports*, in particular. The first is a photo of Eugen Sandow standing proud in business attire next to his elastic equipment [Fig. 22]. The second is a diagram of the "Sandow-Whitely Improved Exerciser in use." [Fig. 23] It shows how the single rope looped through the metal apparatus anchored into a wall, its metal handles being pulled on by the exerciser. This drawing of the elastic rope greatly resembles the elastic in Léger's *Sports*, with horizontal lines across the long lines of the rope to articulate its texture. The final image in the book is an advertisement in its last few pages, an advertisement selling "high-class" weight lifting equipment and includes drawing of attached dumbbells, like that which appeared in *Sports*. The advertisement proclaimed their position as the "sole makers of Sandow & Woodgate's Patent Leg & Arm Exerciser" [Fig. 24]. These were the tools to help the intelligent person become strong, healthy, and therefore beautiful.

Although Sandow's feats of strength were great, he is remembered for the beauty of his muscles. This was no doubt encouraged by the promotional images he circulated of himself dressed as a Greek god or Roman gladiator. He was also a favorite subject for

[96] Sandow, *Strength and How to Obtain it*, 9.

early cinema, which recorded him flexing without props instead of performing his great lifts. Likewise, the marketing strategy he employed, especially towards women, was one that emphasized the beauty that would result from exercise. He writes in response to a pupil's question that exercising on his system will make them look good, as well as improve their kidney function.[97]

Having left his home of Germany to tour, Sandow eventually made London his home and did his best to assimilate. He learned English and wore a proper suit when he was not performing. Throughout his life, he did everything possible to remove his Germanic affect and substitute it with that of a more widely favored nationality. This effort was ultimately unsuccessful. He built a fitness empire that failed when the war broke out in 1914, boycotted for fear he was a German spy. His exercise equipment, baking products, and clothing companies were closed because of his perceived "Germanness," which was the same epithet Herbst received for his *Chaise Sandows*. In an age of people who remembered Sandow's functional beauty well, it is not surprising Herbst named his series after him and his exercise equipment.

In adjusting or redefining the criteria for *beautiful* to include functionality, the U.A.M. made the contemporary world a primary concern. This stance would only be augmented by the U.A.M. in the following years. Their extremely controversial participation in the 1937 Paris Exposition would show just how wide their definition of art could expand, and the multitude of roadblocks put in front of them by the government showed just how important that definition had become. From the Salons d'Automne, to

[97] Sandow, *Strength and how to Obtain it*, Introduction (no page numbers listed)

their own exhibitions, and finally to international exhibitions, the *Chaise Sandows* continued to manifest their project for utopia through modern French art.

CHAPTER V

1937 EXPOSITION INTERNATIONALE PARIS: THE SOCIAL

Parallel to the great popular and social movement of the Popular Front, or rather forming merely one aspect of it, a vast cultural movement is unfolding in France. Its motto could be this: open up the gates of culture. Break down the barriers which surround it, like a beautiful park forbidden to the poor, a culture reserved to a privileged elite.

Jacques Soustelle, June 1936

Today, it is not enough to simply tally the points that are assets for the avant-garde and points that are assets for traditionalism in a critical phrase of the eternal balancing of action-reaction, but to resolve a series of closely related artistic problems and entirely new complicated social, technical, psychological, and economic facts.

Indeed, it will be evident that the subject [of ornament] is much larger and embraces the relationship between architecture and what is loosely called the decorative or applied arts, with the progress and the social condition after the war.

L'Union des Artist Modernes, *Pour l'Art Moderne* 1934

From gas masks to furniture ensembles, fire extinguishers to plant stands, the U.A.M. displayed beautiful French art at their pavilion in the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et des Techniques Appliqués à la Vie Moderne. Scattered amongst displays of large missals and silverware were *Chaises Sandows* to be used as seating for visitors as they traveled through the large, glass-walled structure [Fig. 25]. The U.A.M's goal was to normalize the use of modern art as equipment, and they succeeded in removing barriers between art and the public to do so. Removing the *Chaises Sandows* from display allowed Herbst's design to fully serve its social purpose, which was the U.A.M.'s fourth requirement of beautiful art. As common furniture, the *Chaise Sandows* participated in the U.A.M.'s pavilion's goals of breaking down barriers

and supporting their utopian plans.

The U.A.M. used the term *social* to represent the quality of connectivity between their objects, individuals and larger issues of humanity. Not only concerned with aesthetics, Herbst thought about the quality and results of interactions that would occur between his designs and humans. At the beginning of their manifesto, they contended:

> And that is why, without the desire to enter into a polemic of details or personalities, our group, l'Union des artistes modernes, who consider ourselves qualified by our experience and the orientation of our members' works, decided to publish the present Manifesto in a spirit entirely objective, in order to demonstrate that this crisis (which occurs in the crafts and commerce of art) is only a consequence of the general crisis that affects every social class and producing actives in the entire world. We also intend to consequently prove that the adaptation to progress, which is a vital law, has never diminished the qualities of artistic production.[98]

This concern of the social was so important to the U.A.M. that it became their manifesto's subtitle. Modern art was to be a "frame for contemporary life…truly a social art."[99] Although the U.A.M. used the language of aesthetics to pronounce objects successful, their definition of *beautiful* or *pure* is only partially concerned with visual characteristics. "Pure art is accessible to all and not an imitation made for the vanity of some. And of this it can be proud. 'All elitist art is dead art,' proclaimed Tolstoy, claiming correctly that there can be no art without common faith…a social faith, the assurance that we are the source of a whole system of artistic creation, harmonious, full and sincere."[100] The previously discussed challenge to historicist ornament is evident here through their disapproval of the imitation and vanity found in the pastiche and neo-

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[98] L'Union des Artists Modernes., *Pour l'Art Moderne*, 3. My translation

[99] Ibid., 7. My translation

[100] Ibid., 8. My translation

monarchical styles that the U.A.M. understood as contrary to French tradition. It was in the service of this social faith that tubular steel became a favorite material of Perriand, Le Corbusier and Herbst. For these same reasons, Mallet-Stevens, Francis Jourdain, and Sognot depended on reinforced concrete and large plate glass, and the U.A.M. jewelers Jean Fouquet, Gérard Sandoz, Etienne Cournault and Templier used non-precious stones to make controversial daily wear.

Furthermore, the U.A.M. created a pavilion that served the masses. "Because modern art is truly a social art,"[101] their use of clean lines required like-minded government—ultimately the Popular Front—to give them access to the 1937 Exposition Internationale. Because modern art is truly a social art, they provided visitors with the *Chaises Sandows* in order to offer them comfort and psychological repose; the chairs were used for the health and safety of their fellow citizens. Their abstract forms and scraped facades were also the aesthetics of the Nazis and the Soviets, but the U.A.M.'s architecture and objects at the Exhibition offered a pedagogy of health with the goal of ultimately combating the forces attacking France from the east; theirs was not a demonstration of power but an offer of freedom, the same freedom offered by the Popular front.

The U.A.M. pavilion [Fig. 26] was a union of four geometric structures, the largest two of which extended along the bank of the Seine with glass curtain walls: a rectangle that connected to a shorter trapezium, which had long edges that followed the turn in the river. Attached inland at the center was a third glass cube that included the entrance and a solid rectangle that had Legrain's U.A.M. logo of block letters repeated on the side.

[101] Ibid., 13. My translation

Being on the edge of the river, the entire building was elevated by triangular steal supports, but the visual effect of building blocks that were pushed together was continued as each section was raised at different heights.

The windows were attached in a consistent grid pattern with thin white mullions between planes. At the sharp corners of the building, there were operable windows running the height of it. Conversely, the walls facing inland were primarily solid, allowing for hanging exhibits and those that required a secure backdrop. The transparency of the building meant that the exhibition program began outside as visitors approached. The building itself was composed of mass-produced parts that were assembled on-site at the last minute and constructed as faithfully as possible to the fixed program: "Constructed in metal carpentry with exterior walls in "morelo" porcelain and metalwork, it was entirely realized in standard elements, machine and assembly cut, with an exception made for the *parvi* entrance in reinforced concrete. It is for this technique that we have with great rapidity finished construction: 10 weeks."[102]

Visitors approached the entrance by a set of seven concrete stairs [Fig. 27]. The elements of the pavilion seemed to fit together like the pieces of the tetris board. Inside the first space, which was entirely made of glass walls, visitors saw the sleek staircase by Jean Prouvé, which informed entering visitors that the interior would resemble the exterior. A tall, vertical concrete tower with bas-relief sculpture and the U.A.M. emblem anchored this section of the building through the terrace. Like so many other modern structures, almost all ornament to speak of was limited to the logo on the building and the tower.

[102] Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *L'Union des artistes modernes*. 90. My translation

Preparations: 1929-1935

The story of the 1937 Exposition began in 1929 with the Commerce Commission of the National Assembly, who voted to have a second decorative arts exposition based on the model of the first in 1925.[103] The committee promised a focus on technological progress and youth, but the event expanded to include more than the decorative arts as preparations unfolded over the economic downfall beginning in 1931. This was not only intended as a proclamation of national determination, but also as an imperative economic boost. As was the habit of the French government, they believed that past monarchical forms of ornament were their most reliable way to attract visitors and sell objects with a stereotypical French appearance. Like the work of the government-supported art schools dedicated to designing luxury goods, they planned a sumptuous exposition with more interest in the past than future. A series of newspaper articles from 1931 saved by Herbst projected an elaborate, highly ornamented event which was reminiscent of the Belle Époque, with an abundance of tall buildings laid in a consistent patter at the edge of the Seine.[104]

Preparations were challenged at every turn because of the Depression, international chaos, and a series of French governments that could not satisfy their country's needs. The Exposition became a political battle within the discourse of the decorative arts, as the Expo of 1925 had been before. 19 governments were elected during these eight years, and

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[103] Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Suzanne Tise, *Jourdain*, 331

[104] Newspaper articles saved by Herbst, 1935, box 7, René Herbst Archives, Fonds Privée, Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Although his own name appeared several times, it was only to announce his involvement without any commentary or value statements attached. His name was included only to evidence that he would participate.

the exposition planning transferred from one government to the next. Indeed, every member of the U.A.M. (Le Corbusier included) was prohibited from participation at one point or another.

The Great Depression produced a particularly large amount of damage in France. The first wave came in 1931, and conditions slowly became worse until they reached their most desperate in 1935. The crisis lasted longer in France than the rest of Europe, partly because of the government's refusal to devalue the franc. According to Julian Jackson, one of the primary effects of the economic crisis was to reinforce resistance to change in French society and the reflex defense of the status quo.[105] This phenomenon of the romanticization of past eras was certainly at play in the desire to recreate the expositions of 1900 and 1925.

After the Commerce Commission voted to hold another international exhibition, they formed the *Comité d'Etudes pour l'Exposition Internationale d'Art Moderne à Paris*. Led by Frantz Jourdain, it was a committee of nine members representing the most active art groups in France.[106] The committee included members of the Société des Artistes Décorateurs, the Salon d'Automne, the Société Français des Urbanistes, the Société des Architectes Modernes, the U.A.M., the Beaux-Arts, and the Soiété des Artistes Français.[107] Even with this measure of representation, the U.A.M. members and other progressive representatives on the committee had little influence. The Exposition moved further from modernism when Mallet-Stevens resigned from the Comité d'Études

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[105] Jackson, The Popular Front in France, 17

[106] Udovicki-Selb, *Le Corbusier and the Paris Exhibition of 1937*, 8

[107] Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *L'Union des artistes modernes*. 70

in 1932. Instability grew within exposition preparations and the National Assembly as the economic condition worsened and demonstrations became more frequent. Not long after, the U.A.M. members were excluded entirely from the Exposition for their "mauvais esprit."[108] Herbst and Jourdain were subsequently removed from the *Comité d'Études*.[109]

In 1933 and 1934, steps were taken by Mallet-Stevens, Francis Jourdain, and Pierre Barbe to remind exposition authorities of their movement's existence and the consistency of their modern program with the Exposition's title, *Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*. Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret also attempted to gain the rights and funds to build a permanent building for the Exposition and used their relationship with the chief architect, Jacques Gréber, to do so. Unfortunately for the U.A.M., Gréber was not sympathetic to their plight, since he was a proponent of the Beaux-Arts and interested only in the manifestations of France's past glories.[110]

Considering the alarming state of the nation and lack of unity, it is no wonder that Daladier's removal from office during the events of February 6th 1934 was the first since

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[108] Ibid., 71.

[109] The level of Le Corbusier's participation with the exposition has been contested by recent scholars. Because of the ambiguity of his politics and his celebrity status, Danilo Udovicki-Selb argues that Le Corbusier did not experience exclusion in the same way Herbst and the U.A.M. did. By looking through archives of letters between Le Corbusier, Paul Léon and other expo officials, Udovicki-Selb argued that Le Corbusier's lack of a permanent building has less to do with his politics and more to do with the volatile government's erratic planning and Le Corbusier's inability to secure funding. Considering Le Corbusier was the only architect to show at the expo without having even entered a competition, this is a probable consideration.

[110] Gréber was trained at the *École nationale supérieure* as a landscape architect and concerned himself with city planning. His nationalism was prominent, and he adopted this past style as France's appropriate artistic manifestation. He was so dedicated to the exaltation of France that he named his 1929 two volume book series *Architecture of the United States: Evidence of the force of expansion of French genius*. He contributed to the City Beautiful movement in the United States and designed both the Rodin Museum and Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia in 1929, bringing the Beaux-Arts to America.[110] It was for these reasons he was selected by the right-wing government to direct the planning and visitor experience of the Exposition.

1870 to have been brought down by pressure from the street.[111] Daladiers' replacement Gaston Doumergue named Edmond Labbé as Commissionaire General of the Exposition, assisted by Henri Giraud and Paul Léon. Léon had previously served as Commissionaire General for the Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes 1925 and hoped for a similar event: "I think that the Exposition of 1937 has come to rescue the Art, which is dying. It has come to mark the return of ornament, the return of grace, of variety."[112] This trajectory was visible in the awarding of competition entries, making it more evident that their supposed dedication to progress and modernity, as the U.A.M. understood it, was fallacious. Personal connections and the "*beau rendu*" won attention, and most projects that the commission chose were as lavish as those chosen in 1925. The "radical" Maurice Barret thought these competitions were a deception "cleverly controlled by a minority holding, under a democratic appearance, control levers (Académie, Institute, Ecole des Beaux-Arts)." [113] This was the case for the Trocadéro and le Musée d'Art Moderne.

Herbst sustained conversations with the planning committee through 1935, petitioning for the U.A.M.'s participation. Then, in January of 1936, a petition entitled *Achitecture d'Aujourd'hui* was brought against the competition winners and the eviction of all modern architects that had previously taken place. The petition was specifically against the new, neo-Roman Trocadéro by Jacques Carlu, Louis-Hippolyte Boileau, and Léon Azéma, and the Palais de Tokyo by A. Aubert, D. Dastugue, J-C. Dondel, and P.

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[111] See Chapter two for more about the events of 1934.

[112] Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *L'Union des artistes modernes*. 78. My translation

[113] Ibid., 81. My Translation

Viard.[114] The U.A.M. and similarly minded architects were kept away in the name of France and for the sake of her reputation. Although these challenges were substantial, the U.A.M. took them as an indication of their success.

U.A.M. was militant in combating their oppressors. The group had already established in 1934 that "the vitality of an art can be measured by the degree of opposition it encounters."[115] They claimed, "It is necessary therefore to fight, before everything, against ornament, luxury, and that which comes from our grandmothers."[116] The resistance they received only confirmed their path was the correct one.[117] Being against many of the French ideals of the 19th century, they were only looking for permission to participate, not for approval. However, this governmental opposition changed in the summer of 1936.

Popular Front: 1936

In response to the events of February 6th 1934, the Conféderation Générale du travail (CGT) called for a day of action on February 12th. For the first time since the war, the leftist parties organized together, although they had yet to form official bonds. The Radicals' votes were key to the left's project, but they continued to oscillate between the right and left until Pierre Laval was elected in 1935 as the Président du Conseil and

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[114] Today *Musée d'Art Moderne*

[115] L'Union des Artists Modernes, *Pour l'Art Moderne,* 3. My Translation

[116] Ibid., 31. My Translation

[117] This celebration of opposition and rejection of their grandmothers was not uncommon for European avant-garde movements. It was also prominently seen in Dada and the Futurists.

pushed the Radicals to the left with his severe policies.[118] The unification of the Left that had begun on February 12th came to fruition with a unity agreement signed by the Socialists,[119] Communists,[120] and Radical-Socialist[121] on January 11th 1936, which then became the Popular Front. With the destruction of the German Communist Party in 1933, Paris became the anti-fascist core of Europe and a primary destination for Hitler's refugees.[122]

After the agreement was signed, the Radicals felled Laval's government by each resigned their positions. A provisional government under Albert Sarraut was formed with Radical and Socialist support (the communists abstaining) until the next elections were

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[118] Laval cut all government spending by ten percent and did nothing to curb the energetic activity of the right leagues. This was taken as an indication that of his apathy in defending the democracy. Demonstrations continued as Laval's policies exasperated an economy already in shambles.
[119] The French Section of the Workers' International (*Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière;* SFIO*)*. The party was led by Jules Guesde, Jean Jaurès, Édouard Vaillant and Paul Lafargue, although Jaurès quickly became the central figure. They were opposed to colonialism and maintained an anti-military line until Jaurès' assassination (their primary leader against military use) and Germany's threat of violence grew with a declaration of war and they joined the *Union nationale*. It was a merger of several socialist parties that united to become the French section of the Second International in 1905. The party was replaced in 1969 by the current Socialist Party.

[120] The French Communist Party (Parti communiste français; PCF) was founded when members of SFIO who supported membership in the Communist International (Comintern) broke away in 1920, although this point is argued between parties. It controlled the largest trade-union organization in France (Confédération Générale du Travail) and published the daily newspaper, *L'Humanité*. It was the CGT who had called for a day of action in February of 1934. The Comintern was founded by Lenin after the Bolshevik Revolution and prescribed central membership regulations and party lines. They directed the group from a far, which was populated primarily by working-class members, and monitored its actions, confirming their pro-Soviet stance and belief that social democracy and the SFIO were bourgeois parties. The PCF was the primary director concerning issues of art within the Popular Front who established the Maisons du culture throughout France.

[121] The Popular Front in France, Jackson, 6. The Radical Socialists were neither radical nor socialists; rather, they were the most constant and dedicated defenders of the republic during the early 20th century. Their electoral support came from *les classes moyennes*, the peasants, shopkeepers, small businessmen and the like. Their defense of private property was the primary distinction between the Radicals and other left parties. They filled the center block of voters between the far Left and Right, giving them the position to sway elections. They would often pair with the socialists for voting and break over economic issues following elections.

[122] Jackson, *The Popular Front in France*, 19

held. In the interim, two events increased the Popular Front and Léon Blum's position, the first being Germany's reoccupation of the previously de-militarized Rhineland and the second being members of Action Français physically assaulting Blum. Both events increased demonstrations and bolstered the Popular Front's appeal, having become the self-ordained defenders of freedom against internal and external fascists.

When legislative elections came in May of 1936, the Popular Front was elected with a clear majority. As the government's jurisdiction includes the exhibition, the door was now opened for the U.A.M. Blum took office on June 6th, after Paris had reached an almost paralyzed state from omnipresent strikes. More than 1.5 million workers were on strike, and the industrialists took Blum as their savior when the strikes ended with the Matignon Agreement.[123] On June 10th, Blum presented three more bills to parliament: a 40-hour work week, two weeks of paid vacation for every worker, and simplified procedures for drawing up collective contracts. All proposals became law in about a week's time, an unprecedented speed. They were quickly followed with additional bills, and 24 major reforms passed during the summer of 1936.

U.A.M. Preparations and the Popular Front: 1936

In July, Herbst was reinstated to his leadership position at the Exposition and the U.A.M. members were welcomed back with their numerous projects. Although they had not yet received a contract in writing, the U.A.M. prepared for the construction of their own pavilion and named their organizing committee. Mallet-Stevens served as President,

[123] This measure immediately established a collective labor agreement that increased all wages by 7-15% and established delegates in every factory with more than ten employees.

Marcel Gascoin as Secretary, Templier as Treasurer, and Chareau, Charles Peignot, Lambert-Rucki served as committee members. The pavilion's architects would be George-Henri Pingusson, Frantz-Philippe Jourdain, and Andre Louis. Herbst was given the title of "Organizer General," and Chareau was in charge of the welcome center with the help of Jean Carlu, Fernand Léger, Gustave Miklos, and Moreaux. Inside, a total of seventy artists would display their work.

Despite the change in government, the Exposition's commissioners remained largely consistent. However, the assembly was deeply involved and, for this reason, Blum's cabinet was crucial. It was Jean Cassou[124] and Jean Zay who offered the U.A.M. the most support. Cassou "understood and spoke the language of modernity"[125] and was named to Jean Zay's cabinet as the Minister of State Education and Art Schools. He served as the U.A.M.'s spokesperson and intercessor to Blum. While many of the decisions regarding the winners of pavilion competitions and organization made before 1936 were maintained, an effort was after made to shift attention to science, technology and the youth, with additional buildings and exhibitions to fit the program of the Popular Front.

Two months later, the U.A.M. confirmed their location and were promised funding. Their pavilion would be situated on the border of Quai d'Orsay, on the bank of the port Gros Caillou, not far from Pont des Invalides. Although they were offered spaces closer to the *Tour Eiffel*, the center of the Exposition, they chose this eastern location because the site was specifically tailored for the pavilion they had designed. Sitting near

[124] He is better remembered today as "Alain Fourneir," the pseudonym he used as a writer during the resistance.

[125] Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *L'Union des artistes modernes*. 90. My translation

the curve in the Seine allowed for maximum use of the large glass walls they would construct for viewing the rest of the Exposition.

They finally began building in February, ninety days before Exposition opened on May 25th. Their speed was made possible only by the design of the building, which was an assembly of mass-produced parts. Artists began installing on April 1st, but flooding from the Seine interrupted them for four long weeks. Regardless, they were one of the first buildings open for the exhibition.

U.A.M. at the Exposition

After eight years of volatile planning, the Exposition finally opened only three weeks late. Between May 25th and November 25th of 1937, the 250 acres between the Champs de Mars, Trocadéro, banks of the Seine and Esplanade des Invalides welcomed 34 million visitors and 44 participating nations. Surrounding the *Tour Eiffel* for the third time, the manufactured environment of a world's fair embodied both international events and internal political struggle. The Soviet and German pavilions, two vertical structures looming over visitors, challenged one another across the gardens of the Trocadéro. Picasso's *Guernica* was displayed in the Spanish pavilion, which featured an exhibition of the Spanish Republican Government's battle for existence. The pavilions of the U.A.M. and its members supported the Popular Front while early decisions of right-winged governments remained at the exposition in the segregation of the Colonies and the Beaux-Arts spacial planning.

The inauguration for the U.A.M.'s large geometric pavilion of glass and steel was held on July 1st. Mallet-Stevens served as the U.A.M.'s president at this time and chose to

dedicate the event to the Association Porza.[126] The attendance of prominent politicians, including Paul Léon, Max Hymans, and Huisman caused quite a stir. It was received as a success.

Inside, the pavilion was an educational exhibition with a mixture of interior design ensembles, didactic panels, display cases of wearable objects and technology for living a healthy life [Fig. 28, 29]. Seventy artists displayed under the theme of “art, technique, beauty, charm, [and] evolution.”[127] The objects they displayed, while being art, were pragmatic. Large panels that explained their history and intended use accompanied these displays of fire extinguishers and gas masks. It was another “bazaar,” the ultimate realization of Francis Jourdain’s long desired exhibition strategy. Such an exhibition would be a redemption of the 1925 exposition and the term itself, according to Jourdain: “This word—which is only pronounced with a sort of unjustified disdain—contains, in our opinion, the elements of a magnificent program whose realization opens for the artists the doors of many machines and factories.”[128]

The general program of the UAM’s interior did not follow its directives precisely, but worked toward the concept of a bazaar nonetheless. A small selection of ubiquitous, inexpensive objects and supply catalogues for buildings and hardware were displayed without the mess that is implied in the word “bazaar.” Although it was less

[126] Le Boeuf, Jocelyne. 2006. "Jacques Viénot and the "Esthétique Industrielle" in France (1920-1960)". Design Issues. 22 (1): 46-63. The Porza Association was an international program out of Berlin that worked to bring artists of different nations into dialogue. They did this by building “Abbeys” and organized therein debates with the hope of bringing peace. The French branch of the organization was run by a U.A.M. member, Jacques Viénot, and almost all U.A.M. members participated in their exhibitions.

[127] "art, technique, beauté, charme, evolution se donnent rendez-vous à l’Exposition”

[128] Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Suzanne Tise. *Jourdain*. 82.

rigid than the conventional design of French pavilions, their arrangement lacked the "*beau désorder*" imagined by Francis Jourdain. However, any resemblance to a bazaar may be counted a success, considering the number of other plans that the U.A.M. previously pursued and the challenge of setting up a pavilion of any sort.

Before Francis Jourdain's bazaar was taken up, two pavilions were considered: one concerned with the new crisis of leisure activities and one model of the utopian modern home. Perriand was the primary proponent of the first pavilion, which was named a "Centre de la jeunesse pour les loisirs et la culture." In a letter she sent to Herbst in July 1935,[129] she wrote about the urgent need for recreational activities for the young. This was an issue that had only gained public attention when Blum's bill for a 40-hour workweek and national paid two-week annual holiday had passed. The second proposal for a pavilion representing the modern home was received by Herbst in 1935 from Le Corbusier. In typical fashion, Le Corbusier proposed a permanent structure very similar to the *l'Ésprit Nouveau* pavilion and suggested a partnership with the Société Isorel to create the utopian urban dwelling. Herbst was entrusted with the interior of the pavilion, and the entire project represented the majority of members. Herbst quickly dismissed Le Corbusier's proposal, but the U.A.M. considered Perriand's. A restriction in resources made the decision in favor of Jourdain's bazaar of art and health.

The interior of the structure was similar to the exterior. The triangular steel supports continued from below the building and through the interior to connect to the roof. Walls were painted white and large ramps connected the first and second floor to

[129] Letters between Perriand and Herbst, box 18, René Herbst Archives, Fonds Privée, Musée des Arts Décoratifs,

make it easier for visitors to see the pavilion. The grand hall was covered in murals by Léger, Albert Gleizes, and Léopold Survage. Jean-Lambert Rucki, Jan and Joël Marte, Gustave Miklos, and Joseph Csaky showed sculptures at the entrances and exits, which were primarily abstract figural pieces.[130] Jean-Charles Moreau realized the gardens. In the gallery of ensembles, the U.A.M. members exhibited their recent designs and projects completed in conjunction with industry. Furniture ensembles were created for specific environments, including offices, kitchens, bathrooms, gymnasiums, reading rooms, and study rooms. Chareau organized a welcome center for reading and relaxation.

In addition to his organization duties, Herbst displayed an ensemble in the trapezium space of the pavilion, next to one of the glass walls overlooking the water [Fig. 30]. His display contained no sandows, and the only tubular steel used was hidden in the tall plant stand. The ensemble was set without a demarcation of space, not even a rug on the floor to outline an imaginary sitting room. Instead, the metal chair with woven seat was placed casually near a multi-purpose wooden cart, whose vertical supports curved up and out into several horizontal rings in which rested potted plants. These were new designs with innovative approaches to material. Their contemporaneity made them appropriate objects for display in the U.A.M. pavilion; however, this does not mean *Chaises Sandows* were not present. Instead of being on display, they were normalized as guest seating throughout the pavilion.

The nonchalant use of the Chaise Sandows was purposeful on the part of the U.A.M. It removed the barrier between art and the mundane since the chairs maintained the status of beautiful art while they were able to be used unconsciously to provide guests

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[130] Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *L'Union des artistes modernes*. 90. My translation

with comfort. The chairs were being used as equipment, which was the purpose which they had intended and proposed in the 1935 *Salle de Gym*, display two years before in Brussels. This interaction between chairs and missals, mass-produced building parts and *Chaises Sandows* within the exhibition represented the social aspect of the U.A.M.'s project, the political inherency of which was displayed in its attachment to the Popular Front.

Ultimately the U.A.M. pavilion by Frantz-Philip Jourdain, Louis, and Pingusson—along with others by U.A.M. members—were erected next to those of the Soviets and Germans, the permanent neo-classical buildings of the Trocadéro and Palais de Tokyo, and the heritage buildings of the Grand Palais and Petit Palais. This would be the height of the U.A.M's visibility and cultural influence. The U.A.M.'s belief that modern art must be social was made evident in their pavilion, the other works by their members, and their efforts to realize their exposition. Here they displayed their French art which provided psychological and physical repose, was theoretically financially attainable and highly functional, and most evident in this exposition, was socially engaged.

Léon Blum's government lasted from June 1936 to June 1937, hardly long enough for Blum to open the Exposition as Président du Conseil.[131] Although a year spent in this office is a historically short time, he held his office longer than the four men before him and the following two. Indeed, out of the 25 men who served during the 34 terms in the

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[131] He was then replaced by Camille Chautemps, a Radical, but came back as President of the Council in March 1938, before being succeeded by Édouard Daladier the following month. He served 13 months in total.

interwar period, Blum's time in office was the fourth longest.[132] The Popular Front dissolved itself in autumn 1938, confronted by internal dissensions related to the Spanish Civil War, opposition from the right wing, and the persistent tyranny of the Depression. Less than one year later, World War II officially began for Europe. Germany invaded Poland on September 1st, 1939, leaving France to once again mobilize, fight, and pick up the pieces of a broken world.

[132] He followed only Poicaré Briand, Laval,and Daladier.

CHAPTER VI

EPILOGUE

Today, visitors find René Herbst's *Chaises Sandows* at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the Centre Pompidou, once again atop pedestals in the heart of Paris. They are on display, not in ensembles, but as individual pieces of art from the Modern era. They are accompanied by labels which extol their importance in the history of furniture and for their lasting effects on future chairs, but the labels say nothing of their larger cultural influence. Next to the *Wassily Chair* and *B306,* Herbst's Chaise Sandow has joined the pantheon of tubular steel furniture that defines the 21st century's memory of its predecessor. The *Chaises Sandows* are also found in New York City's Museum of Modern Art and at the Vitra Design Museum in Rhein, Germany. They are likewise found in other spaces limited to the wealthy, on the sets of television shows and in fashion showrooms. Indeed, they have even been bastardized with sleek reproductions which do not show a concern for honoring consistent production methods.

Three immediate problems with this manner of museum display present themselves. The first issue is with the eternal removal of the Chaise Sandow's function. While Chaises Sandows did sit on pedestals at the 1934 U.A.M. exhibition, they were also present as guest seating through the exhibition in transitional spaces. They were elevated to garner attention, but the experience of the chair as functional was still available to visitors. Today, these chairs are for display only, separated from the public by Plexiglas and television screens. This removal of the physical function of the chair

creates the second problem. Since the Chaise Sandows can no longer be used as a machine for sitting, it has arguably been reduced to ornament.

The third problem with the Chaise Sandows sitting in museums is unquestionably their status as an expensive luxury object available only to the wealthy. They have come to cost $30,000 USD at auction and seeing them in a museum requires purchasing tickets to pass through intimidating porticos. For the U.A.M., who worked assiduously to break down the class and artistic barriers, this would be a travesty. However, there is another story to be told.

This thesis began with an outline of a heretical decorative arts ensemble of 1928 and subsequently followed the U.A.M.'s use of the *Chaise Sandows* as it comprehensively communicated their new definition of beautiful French modern art. The *Chaise Sandows* provided psychological repose, was financially attainable (theoretically), was used as equipment, and was socially engaged: the perfect chair. As the U.A.M. developed their controversial project, they intertwined with the Popular Front, who supported their work and allowed them access to their most impactful event, the International Exposition of 1937. This marked the high point of influence for the U.A.M., who receded from public visibility following the exposition when its members again dispersed to fight a second World War, an event that also caused the splintering of the Popular Front. The left coalition officially disbanded when the government was handed over to Marshal Philippe Pétain in June 1940.

Their collective proclivity for social activism pulled many of the U.A.M. members into the Resistance when France so quickly surrendered to Germany in 1940. Other members took positions in the Vichy government working in city planning and

education, but only for a few years at most. Following the war, the majority of the U.A.M. members returned to Paris and reignited their social project, again in the aftermath of devastation. They focused on exhibitions more than creating objects and habitually placed mass-produced, anonymous teapots and spatulas on pedestals without labels. Their architecture was filled with found objects, like Le Corbusier had done in *l'Ésprit Nouveau* pavilion in 1925, before he and Perriand began building furniture of their own. This project was maintained under the titles of the *Robert Mallet-Stevens Club* and *Forme Utiles* until 1955, when Herbst proposed the disillusion of the movement.[133]

This did not mean, however, that the U.A.M. members forgot their social concerns and utopian mission. The furniture Perriand created after she returned from her seven years spent in Asia between 1940 and 1946 was characterized by freeform shapes, the use of unconventional production processes, and large amounts of wood (*Trépied stool*, *tables en forme*) shaped by blacksmiths and woodworkers, not professionally trained cabinet workers. Likewise, Sognot traded spring coils for zigzagging wooden shapes, Gascoin exchanged tubular steel for "Style Reconstruction," which was mostly wood and straw, and Adrienne Gorska left her abundant use of glass for interchangeable wood pieces.

Wood again became the favored material due to the prohibitively high cost of steel, an unfortunate reality the U.A.M. members were hesitant to accept. Even during the height of the *Chaises Sandows'* popularity, they were primarily produced by Herbst for exhibitions or for the homes he was employed to complete as a decorator. These were, of

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[133] Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Suzanne Tise, *Jourdain*, 108

course, the homes of the wealthy. The U.A.M. held onto hope that the costs of production would deflate soon enough to serve their utopian goal. For Herbst, it was the same story.

Already by 1949, Herbst had begun incorporating more wood into his furniture designs, especially plywood. A set of dining room chairs and children's school furniture at the *Formes Utiles* exhibition in 1949, a kitchenette-dining room at the Salon des Arts Ménagers in 1950, and a television console at the Milan Triennial in 1954 were all built with molded plywood. Almost all steel disappeared from his work as time went on, save for the occasional plant stand or pair of chair legs. Plywood proved to be a more sustainable material for furniture, although his exhibition designs and structures continued to rely on the much beloved tubular steel since he retained his position at OTUA through the 1960s.

Herbst, Perriand, and the other members of the U.A.M. who turned to wood represented the general movement of the group following its dissolution. Outside of the U.A.M., the development of ergonomics and a "humanized modernism" continued to develop with designers like the Eames team and Alvar Aalto. The language of titles also expanded. Along with hyphenated terms like "Artist-Decorator," "designer" and "interior architect" have gained wider use. Herbst may have taken the title of "Exhibition Engineer" if he were working today.

Although the only museum acceptable to Herbst was the "museum of the street," the amount of plastic and plywood furniture circulating in the 21st century would likely please him as appropriate replacements of his furniture. The *Chaise Sandows* is no longer contemporary, no longer suitable as the U.A.M. found it to be in the 1930s. Tubular steel has transitioned from innovative to oppressive, and new challenges and technology exist.

Tradition called the U.A.M. to a continual revolution in art, and many designers today follow their lead, whether that be in Philippe Starck's dedication to functionality or in the legacy of Ray and Charles Eames. While they may not create tubular steel furniture, they do design using contemporary means and with the consideration of contemporary needs and so, in a sense, carry on the U.A.M.'s legacy.

APPENDIX

FIGURES

Figure 1. Photograph of René Herbst, *Le Petit Salon*, from *Salon d'Automne*, 1929. Tables and desk: lacquered wood and chromed tubular steel. Chairs: tubular steel, sandows, leather cushions. Image taken from: Goguel, Solange, *René Herbst*. Paris: Editions du Regard, 1990

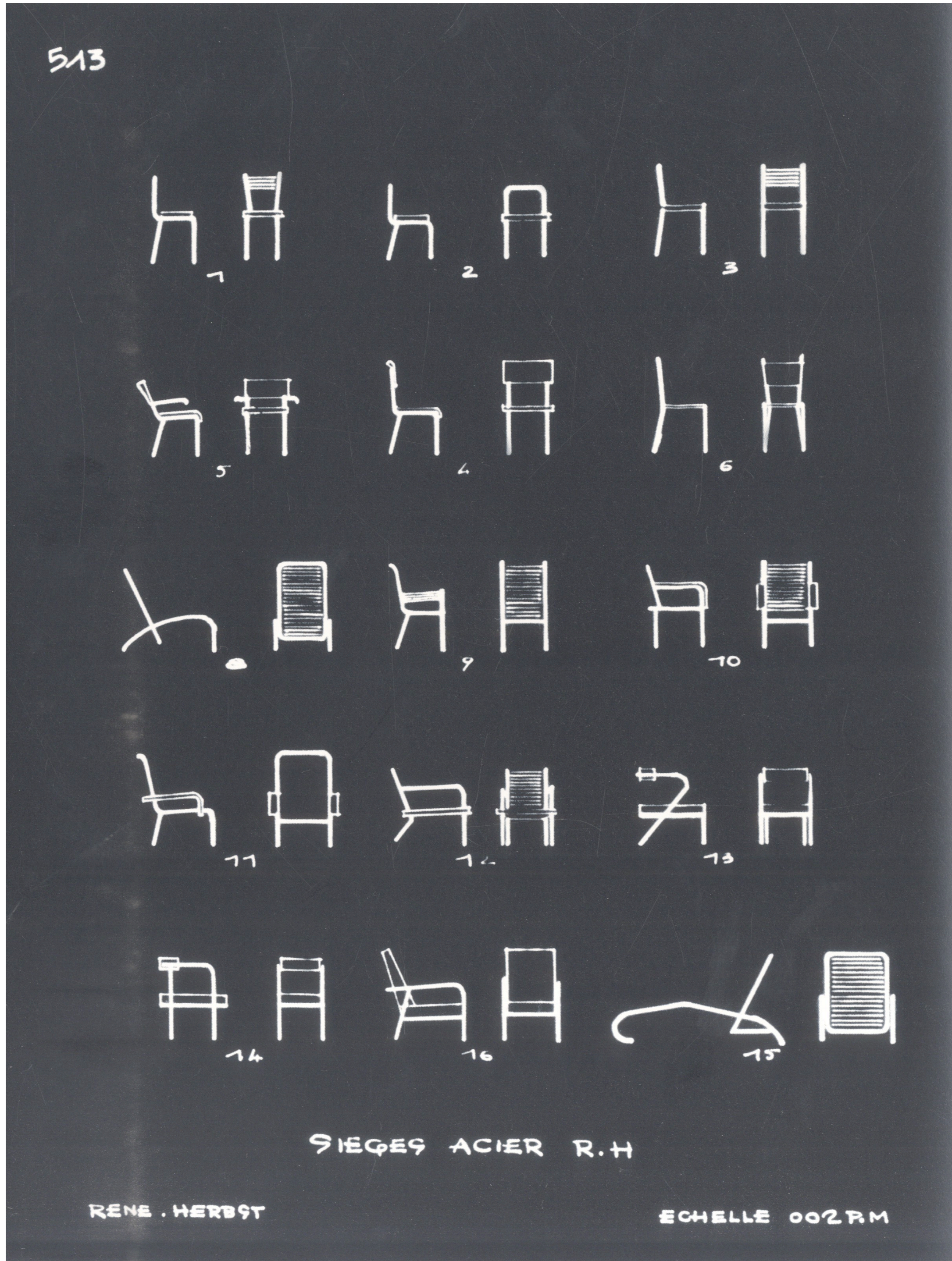

Figure 2. Établissements R.-H. (ed.) production table, 1928. Image taken from Delaporte-Idrissi, Guillemette. *René Herbst: pioneer of modernism*. Paris: Flammarion, 2004.

Figure 3. Photograph of *L'Unité de choc*, from *Salon des Artistes Décorateurs,* 1928. Herbst, Perriand, Bourgeois. Metal furniture covered with cloth or carpet. Image taken from: Goguel, Solange, *René Herbst*. Paris: Editions du Regard, 1990, 60.

Figure 4. Photograph of René Herbst, *La Salon de Musique*, *Le premier exhibition de L'Union des Artists Modernes*, 1930. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

Figure 5. René Herbst, *Herbst Pleyel Piano*, *Le premier exhibition de L'Union des Artists Modernes*, 1930. Mahogany and nickel plated steel. Image taken from: Goguel, Solange, *René Herbst*. Paris: Editions du Regard, 1990, 295.

Firgure 6. René Herbst, *Sandow Piano Seat*, 1930 (Re-issued). Image taken from: Goguel, Solange, *René Herbst*. Paris: Editions du Regard, 1990, 272.

Figure 7. *La Galerie de la Renaissance*, 1934. Photo by Templier. Image taken from: Goguel, Solange, *René Herbst*. Paris: Editions du Regard, 1990.

Figure 8. Photograph of René Herbst *Chaise Sandow*,1933. W 60cm, H 85cm, armrests 42 cm. Photo by Musée des arts décoratifs. Image taken from: Goguel, Solange, *René Herbst*. Paris: Editions du Regard, 1990.

Figure 9. Marcel Breuer, *B 3 (Wassily),* 1925. Manufactured by Standard Möbel Lengyel & Co., Berlin. 72.5 x 76.5 x 69.5; seat height 43 cms. Cold bent, nickel-plated tubular steel; polished-yarn fabric

Figure 10. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *MR 10*, 1927. Manufactured by Berliner Metallgewerbe Josef Müller, Berlin. 79.5 x 46.5 x 71; seat height 40cms. Nickel-plated tubular steel, iron wool.

Figure 11. Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, Charlotte Perriand, *B 306 Chaise Longue*, 1928. Manufactured by Thonet Frères, Paris. Size: c. 70 x 56.6 x 156 cms. Chrome-plated and varnished steel, fabric, steel springs, rubber

Figure 12. Charlotte Perriand, *Chaise longue en bamboo*, 1941. H. 74; L. 140; pr. 52 cm.

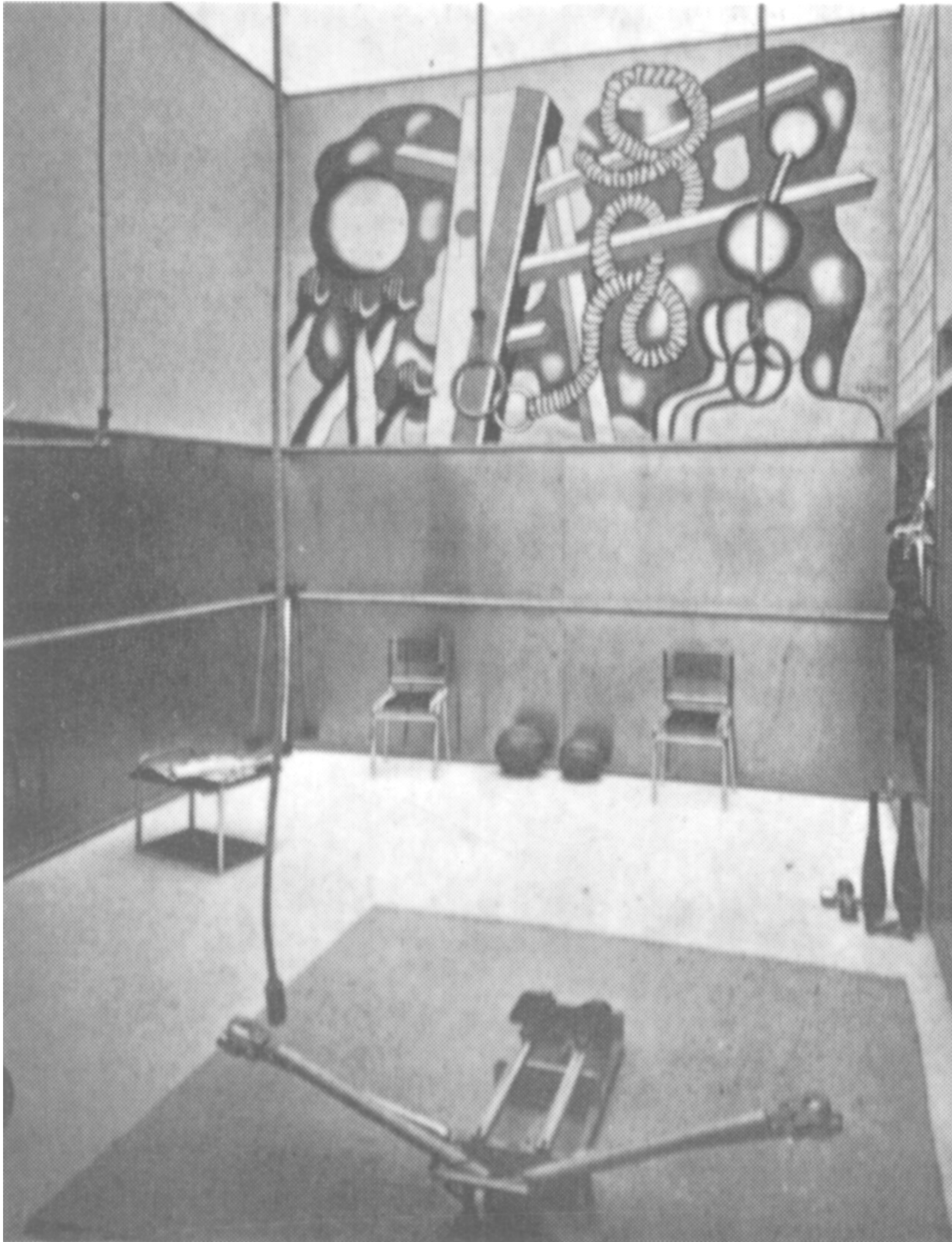

Figure 13. Photograph of René Herbst, *Salle de Gym,* Exposition de Bruxelles, 1935. Photo courtesy of *Les fonds privés de la bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs*, René Herbst Archives (1891-1982), classeur 3.

Figure 14. Photograph of Perriand, Le Corbusier, Jeanneret, *L'Apartement de jeune homme, Exposition de Bruxelles*, 1935. Photo courtesy of *Les fonds privés de la bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs*, René Herbst Archives (1891-1982), classeur 3.

Figure 15. Photograph of René Herbst, *Salle de Gym,* Exposition de Bruxelles, 1935. Photo courtesy of *Les fonds privés de la bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs*, René Herbst Archives (1891-1982), classeur 3.

Figure 16. Fernand Léger, *Dans l'Usine*, oil on canvas, 1918. 56 x 38 cm (22 x 15 in). Courtesy of Helly Nahmad Gallery, New York.

Figure 17. Fernand Léger, *Sports*, 1935. Oil Mural. 235 X 396 cm. Courtesy of the Waddington Galleries, London

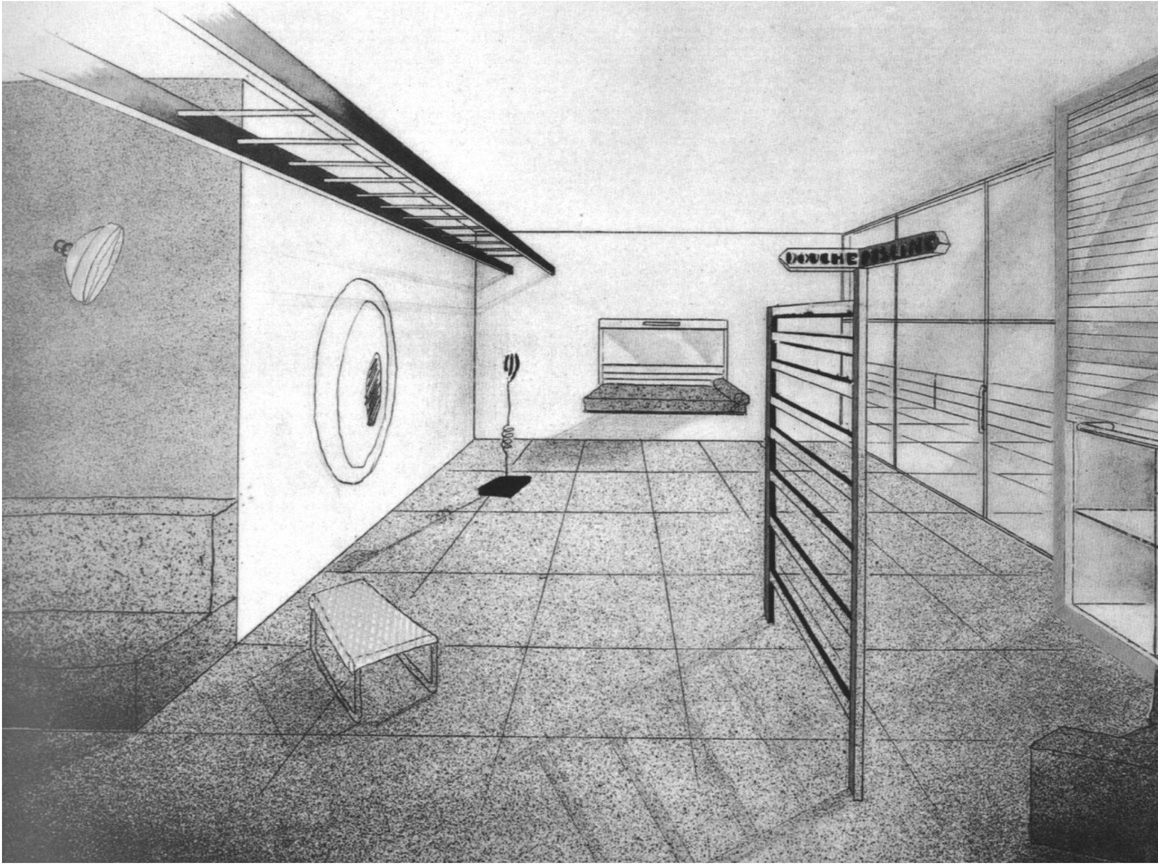

Figure 18. Charlotte Perriand, *Salle de culture physique*, 1928. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

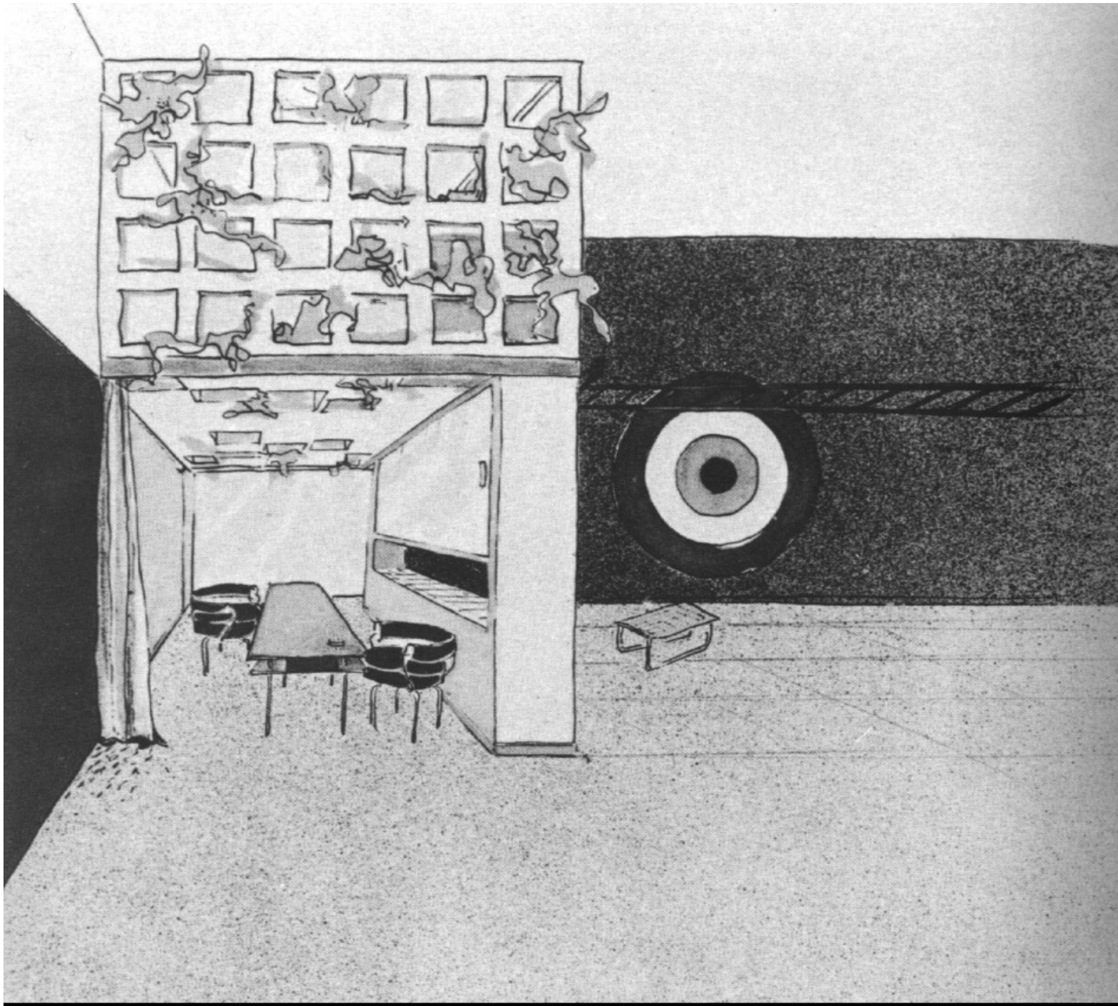

Figure 19. Charlotte Perriand, *Sale de culture physique*, 1928. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

Figure 20. Gabriel Guévékian, *Sale de culture physique*, 1928. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

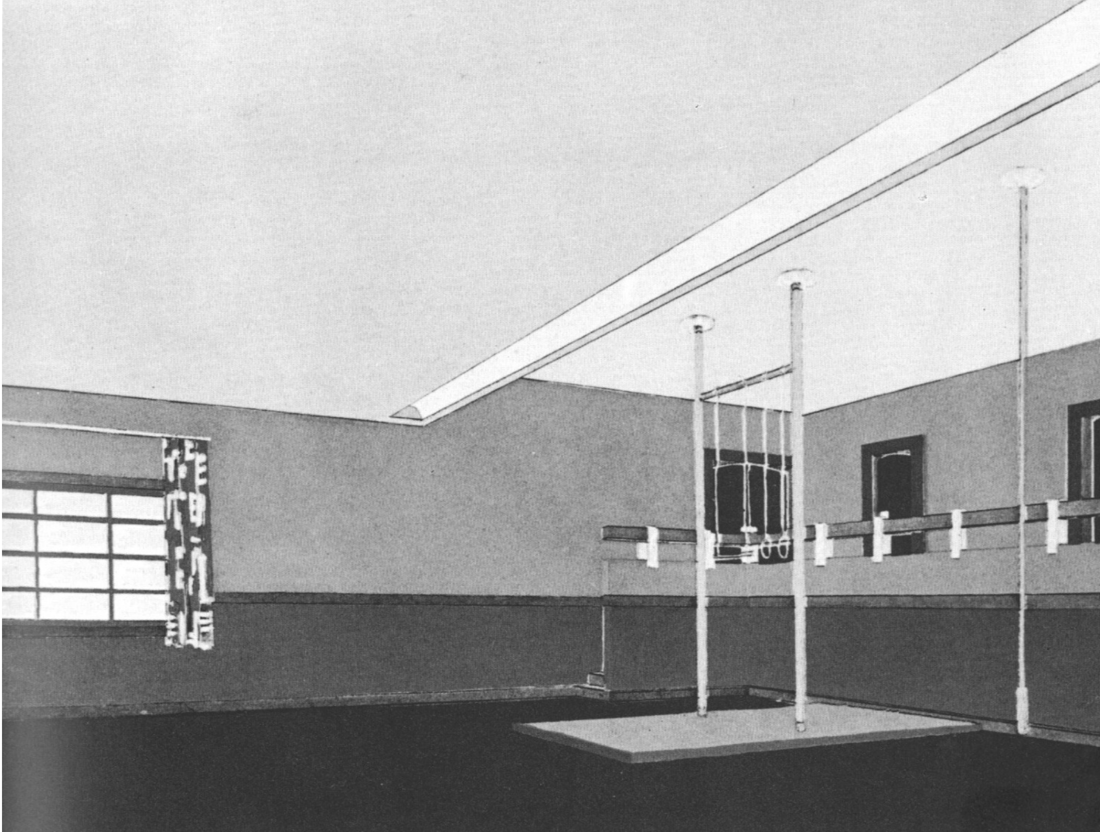

Figure 21. Robert Mallet-Stevens, *Salle de Gym*, 1928. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

SPECIFICATION.

Made of Best Para Rubber, with an improved system of webbing, giving it perfect elasticity. Plated Steel Fittings.

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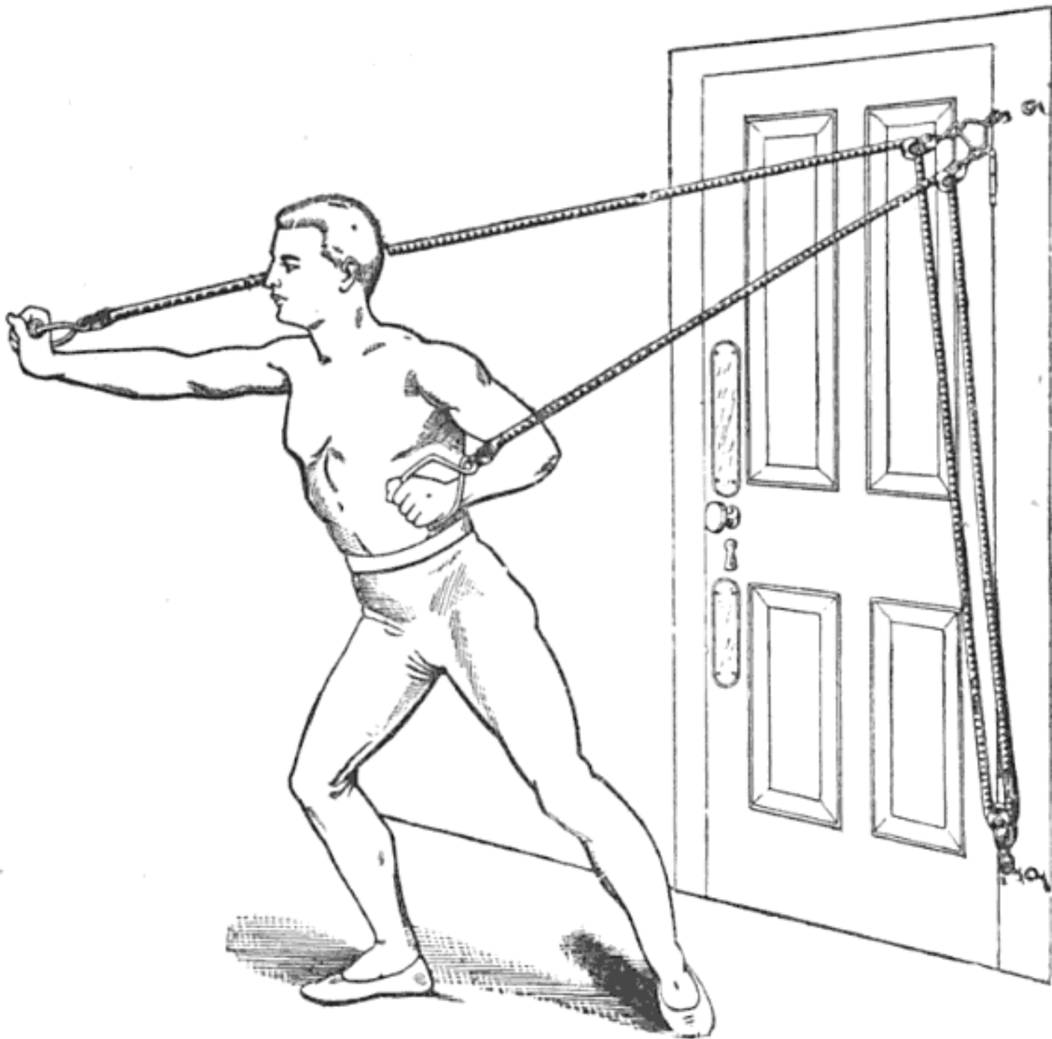
Complete, packed in Box containing Developer, Nickel-plated Dumb Bells and Photographic Chart, 12/6.

Figure 22. Eugen Sandow, *Strength and How to Obtain It*, page 32



THE SANDOW-WHITELY IMPROVED EXERCISER IN USE.

Figure 23. Eugen Sandow, *Strength and How to Obtain It*, page 33

CHARLES HEAP & Co.,

MANUFACTURERS OF

HIGH-CLASS

DUMB-BELLS, BAR-BELLS, RINGWEIGHTS

AND

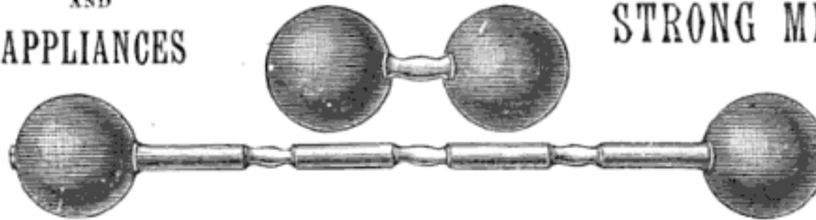
APPLIANCES

FOR

WEIGHT-LIFTERS

AND

STRONG MEN.



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3, 14 & 15, LEICESTER STREET, LEICESTER SQUARE.

WORKS: 10, Wardour Street, London, W.C.

Figure 24. Eugen Sandow, *Strength and How to Obtain It*.

Figure 25. Photograph of U.A.M. Pavilion (Exterior), *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne,* Paris, 1937. Georges-Henri Pingusson, Frantz-Philippe Jourdain, and Andre Louis. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

Figure 26. Photograph of U.A.M. Pavilion (Exterior), *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne,* Paris, 1937. Georges-Henri Pingusson, Frantz-Philippe Jourdain, and Andre Louis. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

Figure 27. Photograph of U.A.M. Pavilion (Exterior), *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne,* Paris, 1937. Georges-Henri Pingusson, Frantz-Philippe Jourdain, and Andre Louis. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

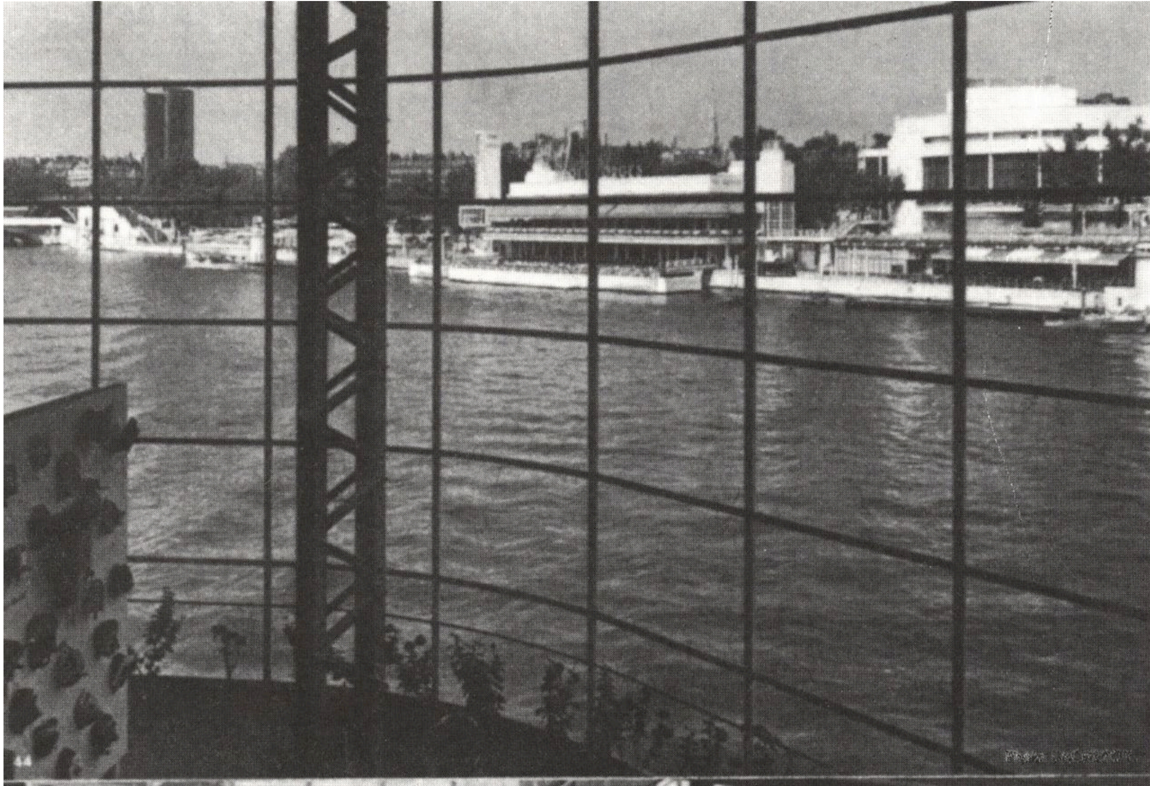

Figure 28. Photograph of U.A.M. Pavilion (Interior), *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne,* Paris, 1937. Georges-Henri Pingusson, Frantz-Philippe Jourdain, and Andre Louis. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

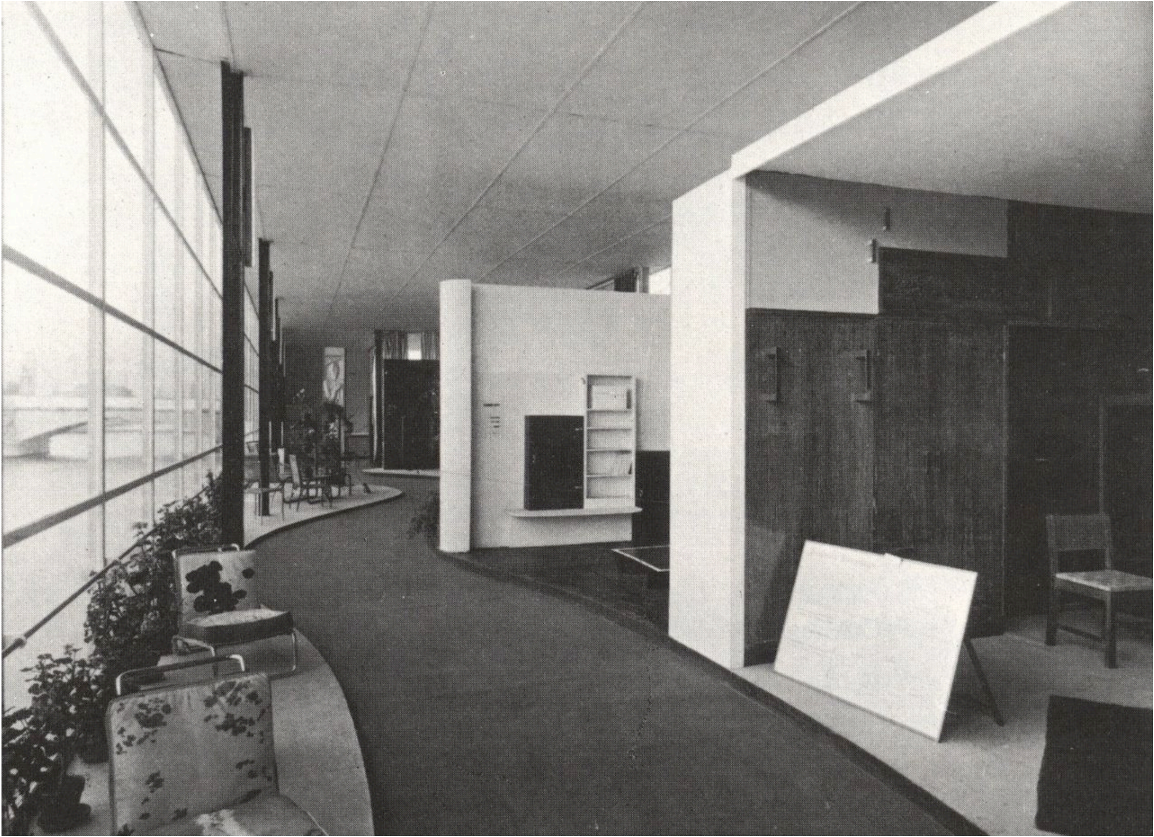

Figure 29. Photograph of U.A.M. Pavilion (Interior), *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne,* Paris, 1937. Georges-Henri Pingusson, Frantz-Philippe Jourdain, and Andre Louis. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

Figure 30. Photograph of René Herbst Arrangement, U.A.M. Pavilion, *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne,* Paris, 1937. Image taken from: Barré-Despond, Arlette, and Jean-Baptiste Rouault. *Union des artistes modernes*. Paris: Ed. du Regard. 1986.

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