

“Engineering Aesthetics”

Technization and Perception as Factors of Joseph August Lux’s Architectural Theory

Abstract

The Austrian architecture critic and theorist Joseph August Lux (1871-1947), who was mainly acknowledged as a representative of the “Heimatschutz” and “Werkbund” movements, published excerpts and pre-versions of his “Ingenieur-Ästhetik” (engineering aesthetics) in international journals as early as 1908. The book, finally published in 1910, anticipated much of the international discourse of the 1920s. Going beyond the mere admiration of the machine and modern technology, Lux aspired to a fundamental change of the contemporary architecture through the “Stilgesetz der Technik” (stylistic law of technology). He believed that becoming used to technology allowed a changed perception, which was the precondition for a new concept of beauty. Only the “new eye” of the modern human being was able to recognize a “new beauty” that was rooted in the technical constructions and increased dynamics of the surroundings. Lux did not think only of the “metallic hands” of the machine, which forced the designer to a new form, but he also shaped the image of the house as a faultlessly functioning apparatus. This article retraces Lux’s argumentation of an engineering and machine aesthetics and seeks explanations for the contradictions within his work.

Keywords

Aesthetics, Technization, Perception, Adaptation, Unité d’Habitation.