

theme 1
theory

strand 1
histories of design criticism

author(s)



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abstract

From 1932 to 1967, Pierre-Louis Flouquet was a key figure of the architectural and design debate in Belgium. Although not an architect but a poet and painter, he is the writer of several thousands articles and the founder and editor of seven magazines as well as the author of several books. His work has been used as source for research on many distinct subjects, but despite of his substantial production, his contribution to the design debate has hardly had any thorough critical attention. We believe that the quality of his substantial body of work is a fundamental source for the historiography of Belgian architecture and design, but also for the general knowledge of the Modern Movement, and particularly the medias role in diffusing its ideas. On the basis of his considerable publications as well as his archives, this PhD intends to analyse the entire production of this multidisciplinary

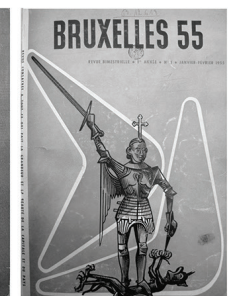
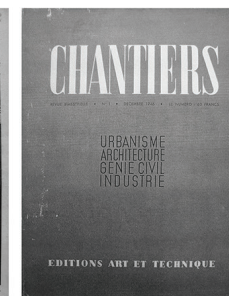
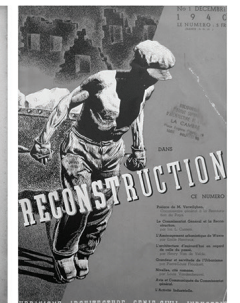
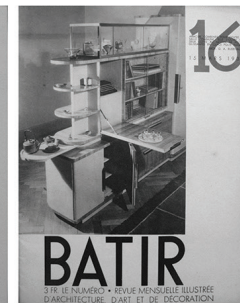
personality. The aim is to give an understanding of the role of his contribution to the debate of the Modern Movement on a local scale, as well as its diffusion and reception by a broad audience.

keywords

modern Movement (01), design (02),
architecture (03), magazines (04).

Devoted to the Modern Movement. Pierre-Louis Flouquet: editor, critic and mediator of design and architecture in Belgium

Although not an architect but a poet and painter, Pierre-Louis Flouquet (1900-1967) remains the most prolific author and editor of articles on architecture and design in Belgium to this day.



This substantial production spanned continuously from 1932 till his death in 1967, and includes several thousands of articles published in magazines and newspapers, the foundation, edition and direction of seven magazines : *7art* (1922-1928; 1948-1949), *Bâtir* (1932-40), *Reconstruction* (1940-44), *Chantiers* (1946-49), *Cahiers d'urbanisme* (1949-1969), *Bruxelles 55* (1955-56), *La Maison* (1945-67), and the publication of several books. His young artistic vanguard background elucidated his concept of modernism (1). All through his career, he based his definition of modernity on notions of multiplicity and inclusion rather than radical orthodoxy. As such, all the arts were included into his rhetoric: architecture, art and advertisement along with design, urban planning and literature.

Although some research on him exists (2), his contribution to the architecture and design debate has however hardly (3) had any thorough critical attention. We believe his body of work is fundamental for the historiography of Belgian architecture and design, as well as for the understanding of the role played by the writers and editors to promote the knowledge of the Modern Movement on a local scale and towards a broad audience.

The aim of this PhD is to analyse Flouquet's role as a mediator of the Modern Movement through the examination of his entire publicised production. By confronting his personality to his material production we wish to give a better understanding of the debate and reception of the Modern Movement. While the historiography of Belgian architecture and design is widely dominated by studies on architects, our work will contribute to recent studies (4) exploring the contribution in this field by figures that were not architects themselves.

Similar to N. Whitely's monography on the British design and architecture critic Reyner Banham (5), we intend to adopt an approach, which is a mixture of chronologically thematic and thematic chronological, since it allows a more complete historicizing. The work is therefore structured around an introduction giving a general chronological outline, followed by four thematic chapters.

The introduction summarizes Flouquet's biography into five chronologically periods defined by his editorial activities. The first regards his avant-garde activities up till 1932. The second relates to the magazine *Bâtir*. The third period covers World War II and analyses his ambiguous role in the public administration of the occupying government, where he published the magazine *Reconstruction*. The fourth period concerns the immediate post-war years where he founded several magazines among which the successful *La Maison*. The last period deals with the end of his life where he progressively was confronted with the criticism of the Modern Movement.

The first thematic chapter is titled "A commitment to an inclusive vision of modernity" and explores his understanding of the Modern Movement. What was his position vis-à-vis the Modern Movement in Belgium and abroad? How did it evolve through his career? How did this vision have an impact on his writings and publications? What heritage did he leave?

"The father of Belgian modern architecture magazines" is the title of the second chapter who examines Flouquet's contribution to the edition of architecture and design. How did his magazines work as a successful vehicle of ideas of the Modern Movement? How did they relate to other contemporary architecture magazines in terms of production process, layout, authors, subjects and audience? How did he involve his broad network of friends and relations, both international and national?

The third chapter is titled "Vulgarizing the Modern Movement". The editorial successes of Flouquet's magazines are symptomatic of the role he played in presenting modern architecture to the broad public and ensuring its positive reception. How did he in terms of layout and language manage to address such abstract concepts to non-professionals? What were the subjects and ideals and how were they explained? What was it that made his magazines so popular?

The fourth chapter is titled "the multidisciplinary specialist". As a poet and painter writing and editing about architecture and design, Flouquet had specific skills and talents that most editors, critics and historians of architecture of his time didn't have. We intend to show how and to what extent his background, as a mediator of the Modern was valuable compared to his contemporary editors or critics? How did it have an impact on the layout of his publications?

Our research is based on two kinds of primary sources. On one side are all Flouquet's published writings about architecture and design. On the other side are the archival sources that offer supplementary biographical information Flouquet. The main archives are located in Brussels (Belgium) at the Archives et Musée de la Littérature. Specific attention will be drawn to the Flouquet archives as well as the archives of his friends : Pierre Bourgeois, Victor Bourgeois, Henri Van de Velde, Paul Dewalhens.

Secondary sources are found in existing theoretical studies on the Modern Movement, historical works on architecture and design in Belgium. Special attention shall be brought to monographs on authors and editors of magazines, as well as on those concerning architects known by Flouquet. This PhD project is also embedded in ongoing research concerning architecture and design medias of the XXth century.

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- (3) VANLAETHEM, F., in VAN LOO, A. (ed.) (2003) *Dictionnaire de l'architecture en Belgique*, Brussels: Fonds Mercator, p. 143-144, 172-173, 186, 413.
VANLAETHEM, F. (1986) *Mouvement moderne en Belgique, 1919-1939*, Montreal: Thèse à l'Université de Montréal.
- (4) See FLORE, F. on K.N. Elno and VAN GERREWEY, C. on Geert Bekaert.
- (5) WHITELEY, N. (2002) *Reyner Banham. Historian of the Immediate Future*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Pic 1. FLOUQUET, P.-L. (1923), Selfportrait, in 7 arts, n°11, p.4.

Pic 2. Covers of the magazines *7art*, *Bâtir*, *Reconstruction*, *La Maison*, *Chantiers*, *Bruxelles 55*.