

## Five Summer Stories

Where were you in '72? On the eve of '73, when OPEC closed the pipelines, America was already stuttering. The draft ended and Charlie don't surf. A long wave with an undertone of expansion was coming to a close out. Armaments were the engine of this system after all, from Korea to Vietnam. While years of lead and a German autumn were on the horizon, already in Milan a rich man died trying to turn off the power. With Berlinguer in Italy and a Common Program in France, the center was affirmed though ideology had begun to drift from the party down roads with broadcast radio. The endless summer of full employment faded while winter swells brewed. Eurodollars and liberated exchange rates attracted capital to finance. The multinational was a state within itself and the global order no longer required 'boots on the ground'. Chile brought the news, but Uruguayan dreams were planted in European minds. '78 was after '77 and in the German Autumn a film was made on the unholy marriage of forces and relations propelling the earth round the sun. A recollection of spring and a desire to stop time because "events have a head start on our understanding."

At vernal equinox Germany pursued horizontality. Corporate structures widened, engulfing competitors, and forming cartels along the way. This was Imperial times. Coal and steel rationalized linking blast furnaces into larger chunks of fixed capital. Britain held a monopoly of markets and continental powers looked outward to external sites of extraction. Yet only America could supersede said dominance. Even before anti-trust laws the US grew vertical firms that connected means to ends entirely. Between two wars, German style planning expanded output at the expense of flexibility. When demand wavered, heavy industry threw its weight behind the state. Armament abated crisis in a promise to put smelted ore on foreign ground. To counter the rise of a new empire, bombing took a precedent in strategy. The Allies' top-target was ball bearings. Strategists fixated on a bottle neck, something at the center of everything else. But "no equipment was left behind because ball bearings were lacking" the Germans would proclaim after the war. Through the end of fighting, production would increase from multiple redundant manufacturers. As American analysts later noted, a more prescient, less flexible target had been over looked: oil.

In peace time American cross hairs would invert to the homeland. Blast radiuses from Hiroshima informed metrics for industrial dispersion. This occurred early in sunny Santa Monica. At RAND, Operations Research begot Systems Analysis and Distributed Communication corrected the vulnerability of the center with networked nodes. The grid enabled defense through space that the highway would extend into a tax incentivized moral cartography. Sprawl coincided with the bloating of middle management. Supersized vertical corporate structures of an export laden domestic economy went multi-national. Yet foreign markets needed reconstruction. Integrated and liberalized European trade was the US answer. Near the Rhein, a century-old Franco-German rivalry of coal and steel required resolution. Cartels were broken up and access negotiated. First the International Desk of Ruhr was established, though

with little satisfaction from member parties. Eventually the European Steele and Coal Community was born, weathering initial turbulence to galvanize interdependency. A strong Europe would deter Soviet aggression and welcome American products. But consumers need jobs and jobs need industry and so production accompanied by competition were encouraged from across the Atlantic as well. Productivity Agencies would introduce carrots and sticks forged in treatise between labor and capital in Detroit. Wages tethered to growth kept most happy for a while.

Though it started with Ford, for a long time after it was General Motors. Alfred Sloan was brought to the car through the Hyatt Roller Bearing Company where as general manager he found a client in GM. In due time an offer was made by the growing giant to buy the bearing company in full. The supply chain streamlined and Sloan would go on to lead GM as the largest company in the world. Centralizing administration allowed decentralized production of variety and style, a hallmark of the postwar. Already in 1930, one in five Americans owned the most expensive thing they could buy, most of them on credit. The UAW agreed to bind the wage to profits, deterring any real struggle over decisions in the factory. Overseas the model worked well enough that in due time American dominance in manufacturing was at stake. Economic miracles eclipsed hegemony along with a new school in Ulm.

Otl Aicher wanted new citizens, new cups, and new cities for year zero. The first model was Humboldtian. Continuing education to unlearn the past. This sounded appropriate to American ears, so the Hochschule für Gestaltung began with a check from the US High. Max Bill arrived but attention was turned to Chicago not Dessau. A heady corporatist, Walter Paepcke funded another new Bauhaus there. Maholy-Nagy entwined aesthetics with science and briefly the American romance of commerce and culture found great heights before settling in Aspen for the enlightenment of managers. Back in Ulm, Moldonado came with semiotics to supersede Bills intuitive artistry. Tending toward cybernetics, the school would soon splinter but not before Aicher could form a group to take on Munich. Already in '67 his eyes were set on '72. Penning a text for Die Ziet, the designer would diagnose Munich's False Belief in the Stars, by which he meant the center. In Aicher's mind the automobile offered autonomy in a gridded geography while public transport left life rigidly tethered to the hub. With a growing tech industry, the city should attract the brightest minds through flexibility and access to leisure on four wheels. This was all a sales pitch of course, the true egg to hatch was the Olympic program. With the city convinced by his vision, the commission was awarded.

Little is possible without clients, which meant modernism had to be sold. This was before the consumer had been constructed along with its desires. By then anyway, the modern was pastiche. The best pitch for these elites was distinction, "from the past" surely, but first within the market. Prior to the MoMA's founding, Alfred Barr would pen his admiration for a candy factory's virtuosity. Aesthetics rendered pure by forces and social relations of production; a sign of its rational referent concealing the pregnant contradiction. Soon he'd hire Edward Bernays to publicize the new institution, making his impression felt in exhibitions to follow. Machine Art got

headlines, as was intended, while the Department of Architecture grew to include Industrial Art. On its Josef Albers designed catalogue cover: a ball bearing made in Philadelphia with Swedish capital and American labor. The same that allies would bomb the next decade. Something in the middle of everything else.