

Fig. 1 – the gap between the ornament and its support can be transposed onto the gap in the ornament, as above: where the affordances of the ornament to curl in on itself, is a possibility explored by Bjørn Blikstad in his PhD work. This task can be seen as imminent to the ornamental project after Adolf Loos ambivalent rejection in [Ornament and Crime](#).

Modernism often defined itself by submitting an account of the old: this account was a narrative, featuring the critique of the past as the protohistory of the new. On the backdrop of this narrative, however, practices were invented to audit the past. The narrative was inventive, the practices were inadvertently/secretly metaphysical (occulted by a quest and query for a justification of the new). A mix between modern story, a tribunal and an accounting-agency. When Bjørn Blikstad teases out all of these dimension when looking into Adolf Loos works and positions, a critical twist is invented.

He shows that Loos' criminal indictment of ornamentation, defines it at new—sublimated—level: where it is brought to exist and unfold in anticipation and postponement (as a complicit/shrewd form of denial). Based on the case of the project proposal for the Doric Column design for The Chicago Tribune (1923), Blikstad points to how ornamentation is not removed but displaced and redefined as a pun: the Doric COLUMN and the newspaper *columns*. Ornamentation is thereby not eliminated but displaced and invented as contingency: the business-rub between COLUMNS.

That is, whichever rub one might fancy, really. Which is how and why Blikstad's assignment of Loos' critique of ornamentation to the psychoanalytic theory of sublimation (Freud) might stick. Also because—in 1923—it is contemporary (and hence contingent) with psychoanalysis. In his citation in quote of Loos' German verbatim, there is an interesting snag that might point in this direction. I stop at it now, as I stopped at it while reading Loos at some earlier occasions: *Aus dreißigjährigem kampf bin ich als sieger hervorgegangen: ich habe die menschheit vom überflüssigen ornament befreit*. Indeed, what exactly does *überflüssigen* (superfluous) indicate?

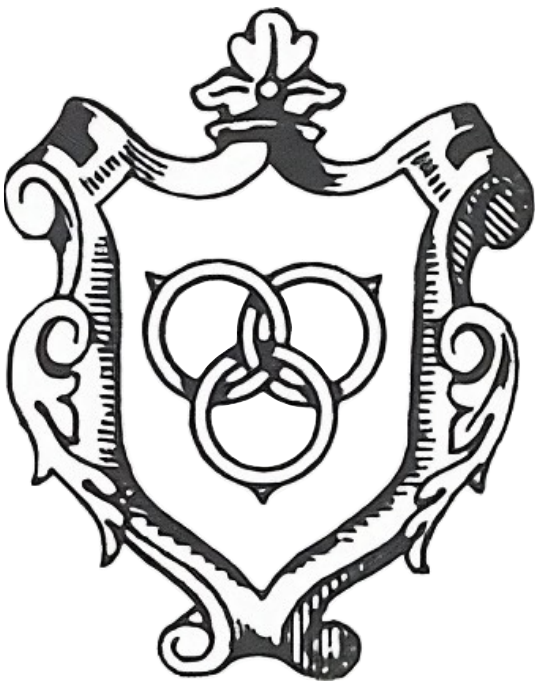


Fig. 2—The heraldic crest of the Borromeo family's coat of arms, from which Lacan derived the Borromeo knot (Venn-like diagram). Featuring e.g. in the tripartite unity between the imaginary, the real and the symbolic.

Does it mean that ornamentation, in general, is superfluous? Does it mean that *some* ornamentation might be needed, so only the superfluous ornamentation is removed? Does it mean both at the same time (in which case it is perverse, shrewd or at least complicit)? That is, a general statement of a neurosis put into cultural circulation by making it convertible through Loos' variety of designs. In this aspect, we actually would not know whether Loos is a modern descendant of Gottfried Semper, or precursor of the Bauhaus. He doesn't completely remove ornamentation but displaces it.

Continuing the psychoanalytic scoping of this displacement, Loos' perspective on photography—pointed out by

Blikstad—expands the slippery slope of *überflüssigen*, to photography: adding a visual record to Loos interiors, yet also an unrecognisable layer; whereby photography becomes alienated from the interior, and is a world unto itself (containing its own reality). Here, we recognise a snippet of what later became a leading trend in the theory of photography: in the first rank, Cartier Bresson. The theorising photographer. It features, in our view, the counterpart of the philosophising mountaineer.

The alienation of photography from its motif, makes it adjacent—and ambiguously *überflüssigen*—available to any rub we might fancy: in relation to its studium (Loos' designs) the photography itself becomes a punctum, to use Roland Barthes' terminology from *Camera Lucida* (1980). The prick or prickle conveyed to us on our own account: Roland Barthes' *punctum*. Marcel Duchamp's amazing of the voyeur vs. the regardeur/viewer, seeks to model a between-space that Loos preferred to let void. Thereby making apparent the attempts of reconquest of the contingent in modernism.

In Loos the said rub is arguably let *random*—or, given to privately domesticated chance—while in Duchamp and Barthes it is clearly contingent (that is, alongside and touching [colouring or dyeing]). Pertaining directly to ornament, we will argue that Jacques Lacan's geometric usage of what appears like a 3-pronged Venn diagram, went the opposite way of Adolf Loos, by using the family crest of the Italian name Borromeo, as a point of departure: moving from (a) the ornament to (b) the diagram features the itinerary of psychoanalytic path. Seeking knowledge/wisdom in the ornament.

Lacan oddly rejoins Loos—even if Lacan moves the rub in the opposite direction from Loos—in that they are both dealers in *discourse*: Loos by proliferating his sublimation of ornament into the fabric of cultural relations through his designs; Lacan by virtue of displacing psychoanalysis from the confines of the consultation (the couch and the chair) to the opencast of cultural archaeology in public space (i.e. out of the therapeutic confinement). We can readily see how the political emancipation of psychoanalytical discourse would later result in Deleuze & Guattari's *Anti-Œdipus* (1972).

Voiding contingency vs. methodologising contingency may be seen as separate political directions: voiding contingency (Loos) as the displacement of objects into products—where the rub is up for grabs—methodologising the rub which runs from Duchamp, through Fluxus, Beuys and Artistic Research. In its contemporary version today, the Rub-let-Loos has passed through the dissolution of the system of objects (Baudrillard, 1968) into financial systems of transactions gathered into portfolios offered to their costumers as products, and principally indexed by currency fluctuations.

In the anthropocene weather reports and fluctuating market-indexes—based on financial products—have become deeply related: in that we can see them as causally connected, but also that the connection is likely a copy-cat replica of the pun (let Loos). Unmaking the connection of the object to itself, and ultimately unmaking the connection to the object. If this deep fake was necessary and

instrumental to the development of capitalism, Loos was arguably one of its most important early proponents in his skewed war against ornamentation. That is, his unmasking of ornamentation while obviating his deep dependency on it.

In this aspect, Adolf Loos' discourse—in Lacanian terms—was *hysteric* (H): with deep subterranean dependency on the *master* (M). Here, we have let Loos the *analyst* (A) with a new *quarter turn* (90°): what unfolds here when we take the gap of the pun (let Loos) into account. Finally, the *points* (P) we may make and count as we complete our tasks (hence the possibility to move from the assumption to the assignment of tasks). The result is locking up Lacan in a form of currency (Fig. 3 *one lacan*). The domain of this currency is to make up for the current discrepancies (e.g. at KHiO) between (1) the monetary regime of *budget, cost and expenses* and (2) *capital* as the economic potential for value creation in society.



Fig. 3—S₁ (e.g. Charles Dodgson as signifier) and S₂ (Lewis Carroll as signifier of signifier), \$ as the unconscious, a as the object little a (*petit objet a*)—featuring the gap between sign and object—featuring pleasure and frustration meddled alongside in the plot/intrigue of *Alice in Wonderland* as an English tale