

# How International was International Style of Architecture?

MGBEMENA Emeka Ebuz, OKONTA Ebere Donatus\*

Department of Architecture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria

\*Corresponding author: [donatusokonta@gmail.com](mailto:donatusokonta@gmail.com)

**Abstract** From early civilization to now, architecture and its components have always undergone periods of transformation. This is in line with man's constant quest for change. These transformations have created new methods, materials and technology. Most a time, civilizations display their wealth, power and splendor through architecture. Little wonder America as an emerging super power in the early 20th century saw this as an opportunity to show case their prowess through architecture. International style came at the right time and was used as the tool. This paper will focus on events that spurred international style, its problems and prospects and how far it went in achieving its ideals. Consequently, the physical characteristics of the extant style will be analyzed in relation to its contemporaries. In summary, international style was able to spread around the world due to the political ideas and will of the originators and most importantly improved systems of communication.

**Keywords:** *international, style, architecture*

**Cite This Article:** MGBEMENA Emeka Ebuz, and OKONTA Ebere Donatus, "How International was International Style of Architecture?" *American Journal of Civil Engineering and Architecture*, vol. 6, no. 1 (2018): 30-37. doi: 10.12691/ajcea-6-1-4.

## 1. Historical Background

At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was no notable new architectural style during the period prior to 1920, except for the unpopular constructivist movement in Russia (1890-1920), propelled by Eliezer "EL" Lissitzky (1890-1941) and Kasimir Malevich (1878-1935), with its combination of contrasting geometric shapes in a dynamic arrangement, and later Art Deco. By 1930, industrial production was experiencing a decline, unemployment rates rose and about six million Americans were jobless. This period was the post-war era (Second World War), the world tended towards a lot of reconstruction and rehabilitation for millions of displaced people. Colonial rule was still the political practice in Africa, Middle East and Far East. The world was experiencing great depression, and austerity measures had to be adopted because of under-production of industries, and large-scale unemployment. As expected, the great depression which swept across Europe and America did not spare architects, except for the likes of George Howe (1886-1955) and his partner, Arthur Meigs who tried to come to terms with this radical shift in architectural values. Meigs believed that industrialization and politics would never influence architecture, and as such saw the capitalist and communist orders as having the same format, only varying in reversed hierarchies. While the capitalist revered civic structures, the communist paid more attention to domestic buildings. Perhaps, the ideology helped plunge their practice to great heights even in this austere time. Poelzig (1930) [1] wrote, "The coming time of poverty seems to me an opportunity to divest architecture of purities of style. The

means are few and compel us to limitations. The forces of change in the nineteenth century had dramatically changed western society from monarchy to democracy, from religious devotion to secular concerns and from aristocratic taste in the art to one dominate by industrial entrepreneurship and middleclass.

From Africa to New Zealand, from Alaska to Siberia, architecture was called upon to provide on a scale never before envisaged, facilities and amenities of economic growth, new habitation for the wartime homeless in Europe and for the increased number of urban poor in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries.

Much of what was achieved in International Style relied on the development done on iron (by Englishman Henry Bessemer), glass, concrete and few other new materials. Prior to modern era, iron which was accidentally discovered in the early times, had for centuries played clandestine roles in buttressing buildings, holding domes, acting as frames for glass and in arts. It was not until Thomas. F. Pritchard and Abraham Darby built an iron bridge at Coalbrookdale that iron's potential as a building material started coming to bear. It revolutionized the building industry, and sparked the evolvement of a new profession called Engineering. It can be said that iron's "re-discovery" was the catalyst behind modern architecture. It can be likened to the architectural revolution experienced in the classical times when concrete 'Pozzolana' was invented by the Romans. This "new found" material (iron) sparked up great works rendered virtually with iron like the Brooklyn Bridge designed by the Roebling brothers; the Eiffel tower, and the frame structure for the statue of Liberty designed by Alexandre Gustav Eiffel, and so many others. Engineering was given the task of evolving new technical processes, new materials, new aesthetics

and functional requirements. This ended the search for architectural styles, at least for a while. In practice, structural implications of buildings pre-dominated the importance of function and aesthetics. Architects and Engineers exploited the advantages of the material iron to build skyscraper and monumental structures, unencumbered by columns. It is worthy knowing that Europe had no skyscrapers until after the Paris exhibition of 1889, which fielded doctrine that helped in building the Eiffel Tower and similar structures. The success of this material in construction helped so many architects of the new age to propagate the ideals that ushered in the international style. These architects rejected vehemently the revival of historic styles, instead, they returned to the basis of architecture: – *form, structure and proportion*.

Notable among these architects was Adolf Loo, who was regarded as the ‘fore-runner’ of International Style. He did not belong to this school, but propagated doctrines that influenced the pioneers of this style. His famous phrase “*ornament is crime*” was his comparison of classical and medieval artistry with body tattoos usually worn by convicts; this was his own candid way of expressing his distaste for ornamentation. Probably if Loo was living in this 21<sup>st</sup> century when tattoo is the vogue, and is worn by all categories of people, he possibly would have had a re-think in associating tattoos with crime. Loo disliked ostentation, not the richness. For Loo, simplicity is uncompromisable. His stand earned him so many disciples like Walter Gropius.

In Germany, Walter Gropius (1883-1969), the founder of Bauhaus and his partner Adolf Meyer (1881-1929) were extremists. They not only agree that ornament is crime, but will want a punishment instituted for would be offenders. Like Adolf Loo, Gropius rejected revivalism with its use of motifs, ornaments, and profiles from previous cultures. In his words, “it degraded a building to a status of a bearer of dead decorations”. Concern with forms was no longer a matter of its own, but became an integral part of productive activity. He had recourse basically to only two materials, that is, glass for the spaces and white plaster for the walls. The plaster served to stress the geometrical relations by temporarily renouncing the typical physical determination of the various materials. He promoted the philosophy, “*form follows function*”, a doctrine by Louis Sullivan of the Chicago School. He believed that art, design and construction should be united. Characteristics of some of his buildings are in having precise forms, simplicity in multiplicity, repartition according to function and restriction to typical basic forms. Gropius saw building as a way to shape life processes. His architectural ideology did not recognize any national boundaries. He hated to use the word *style* because he believed that there was something bigger and more absolute. Allsopp, B (1960) [2] seem to agree, “People who dislike it call it the modern international style. It is certainly modern and international, but it is not a style. If the word style is accepted, the battle is lost”. Gropius was fascinated by monumental buildings, especially the ones that looked to the future.

Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) was regarded as the master of reinforced concrete. His works pre- dates this style and is often regarded as one of the fore-runners. He was even part of the Johnson and Hitchcock exhibition

that sold international style to the world but his works were tactfully and intentionally excluded from the catalog, which infuriated him. His motive was for an organic architecture designed for a democratic society. He usually criticized architecture since the Renaissance as corrupt, adulterated and inorganic. The curious he said is usually confused with the beautiful. He usually equates Gothic with organic and natural, and calls to the art and architecture of modern times for a return to the “Gothic Spirit,” it is the responsibility of America, more than any other nation to create architecture in the spirit of democracy. Architecture of individuality and industrial ideals.” [3]. He recognizes especially traditional sensitivity for the natural beauty of Japanese materials, and advocates for its adoption in modern buildings. He believes that a blend of east oriental and west traditions will harmonize modern space with nature. He used stronger horizontal lines, and regarded it as the line of domesticity. His love for horizontal lines and extending structures into the landscape is evident in the Prairie houses he built. He usually criticized the skyscrapers as an abomination, unsuited to America’s desire for spaciousness. In his words, “the house, its furnishings and surrounding must form an integrated whole. Everything must stem from the same concept. No decoration and no pictures on wall, the ceiling must be relatively low and windows in compact rows. Living space, kitchen, and bedroom must be part of an integrated group” [4]. Frank, in most of his speech talked about the dangers of establishing one style of architecture as correct. He branded International Style as the new eclecticism; an easy formula that anyone could copy. He believes that one style will come and go as the physical and social environment keeps changing with time. As Osasona, C. O and Hyland, A.D.C [5] put it, “having passed through various periods in history-from the Renaissance to the Art Nouveau, through the Modern Movement and the International style, to the Post-Modern era- attitudes as to what constitutes architecture have constantly swung back and forth like a pendulum. In the same way, architectural decoration has been tossed around, at one time in favor, at another, termed primitive”. Over time, the purity of form that was the bedrock of the modern movement has again come into disfavor”. One of his best-known works (Frank) are the *falling waters*, home owned by Edgar. J. Kaufmann in Pennsylvania, and Johnson Wax Company Administration Centre in Racine, Wisconsin.

Other architects like Mies Van der Rohe, Louis Sullivan, Ludwig Hilberseimer, and Henry Van de Velde were all advocates of an extremely rational and social-minded approach to the problems of architecture, but were all involved in this interval of fantasy. Mies (1886-1969) is often regarded as the father of modern architecture. His works are stripped of all overtones of style and deco, depending for its effect on the simplification of structures, and amplifying the saying “*less is more*”. He will often joke about his works, and will reply that “*God is in the details*”.

Modernists eschewed space boundaries. In Scheebarts prophetic words, “if we wish to raise our culture to a higher plane, then we are compelled, for better or worse, to change our architecture and this will only be possible for us when we remove the boundaries from the rooms we inhabit. We can however only achieve this by the

introduction of glass architecture which lets the light of the sun and the moon and the stars into the rooms, not only through the windows but through as many walls as possible that are completely glass. The atmosphere which we create for ourselves must bring us a new culture” Paul Scheebart wrote in the *Glasarchitektur*, Berlin, [6].

Similarly, Bruno, T. [3] in his book wrote that Modern Architecture should recognize, “... No demarcations between façade and ground plan, road and courtyard, or between front and back of a building. Nor does any detail exist for its own purpose alone, but should be designed to serve as a necessary part in the general plan. Everything that functions well looks well. We simply do not want to believe that anything can look unsightly and function well’.

Le Corbusier who is regarded as the father of architecture sees architecture as a tool for solving man’s problem. He was obsessed by machines and automation. He wrote, “What else is a house other than a machine for living in” Batur, A. [7] he believed like Rudolph that form follows function, and styles are a lie. He was never pleased with how Paris looked and always wished he could tear down and re-build the whole city. He usually will boast of one building for all nations and climates. His *Voisin plan* received a lot of criticism from architects like Vincent Scully who described it as “cataclysmic” and cannot work. For *Stern*, he saw it as utter nonsense because it will end up destroying a people’s history. Stern R. [1] wrote, “We cannot sustain that permanent revolution which orthodox modern architecture has as its basis without destroying our cities and the heritage of our past.”

For Paul Rudolph, his designs were based on six determinants of architectural forms namely, the relationships between a building and its environment, functionalism, regionalism, material of construction, psychological demands, and the spirit of the time. Rudolph uses broad eclecticism based on geometrics developed by early masters like Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright.

## 2. International Style

In view of the economic quagmire of the post war era, the call for judicious use of public funds, and high demand for urban land spurred this architecture. Other reasons include, technological development in iron and glass, search for an architecture without cultural and material barriers, the usual century crave for a new style, engineering struggle to make a statement, and also as a result of growing international building consortia led by American and European architects. It was not surprising that it was born in the U.S because America was quietly establishing itself as the next super power which behoves on her like earlier super powers the leadership role in all spheres of life.

Architecture was no more considered or seen as a mirror of the society, but as one of the services necessary for communal life, and which provision depended on economic viability. Architecture concerned itself with quality delivery instead of cultural ties associated with classical and medieval architectures. As Batur, A. [7] described the style, “the new period opened with an

understanding of design, bearing the stamp of the U.S, but actually having international properties. The new International Style was the reinterpreted lines of the pre-war modernist currents in the U.S. It was a new version abstracted from the populist-political contents of European modernism and untied with the technical and commercial experience of American skyscraper architecture”.

International style which is also known as International Modern, or American Rationalist European Architecture was invented by an American Architect, Johnson Philip Cortelyou. He belonged to the second generation of leading American architects of which Kevin Roche, Paul Rudolph, Eero Saarinen, Richard Foster, Henry Hitchcock, and a host of others were part of. They were regarded as formalists, refiners and re-definers. The first generation belonged to Le Corbusier, Mies Van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright and co. Johnson invented the term International Style to denote what they considered to be important developments in modern architecture that were leading towards building designs that were simple, unadorned and expressed their structure with modern materials. In Johnson’s words, “these trends, adopted by architects all over the world would lead to a Modern Architecture devoid of local material and regional character Prucnal-Ogunsote B. [8]. Universal ideals for all mankind led to concepts of equally universal architectural ideas. International style proclaimed its independence from unique requirements of place, culture, climate and time.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1932, Henry- Russel Hitchcock (1903-1987) and Johnson Philip Cortelyou mounted an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Arts to explain what modern should be or look like. This was because in the late 1920s and early 1930s there was no consensus as to what modern is and should be. This humble exhibition gave birth to a new style called *International Style* which the exhibition was called. This style was based on these principles: -

1. It was concerned with volume rather than mass. This was because traditional load bearing walls were replaced by cage of skeletal support and as such greater freedom can be achieved on the inside of a building. Exterior walls will then serve as light skin protection from weather.
2. The chief visual motif of a modern building should be a reflection of the underlying regular rhythm of the structural system.
3. This regularity could be modulated by an expression of the varied purposes of the building, but all attempts to compare the elevation were artificial, i.e. structural system dictate, the design of the façade.
4. The elaboration of architecture especially as it pertains to ornamentation and applied decoration served no positive function as far as building is concerned.

## 3. Based on These Principles, International Style was Born!!!

This exhibition featured works like that of Walter Gropius’s Bauhaus Building in Dessau, Raymond Hood, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and a host of others. Below are a few examples;



Source: By Valueyou (talk) - I created this work entirely by myself., CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19648390>.

**Figure 1.** Villa Savoye, Paris, Le Corbusier



Source; Photograph by Jack Boucher - Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress HABS PA,51-PHILA,584-36, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=7636585>.

**Figure 2.** PSFS Building, Philadelphia, George Howe and William Lescaze



Source: By Mewes in de-Wikipedia - Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=165180>

**Figure 3.** Bauhaus, Dessau, Walter Gropius



Source: Photograph by TS-Yhtymä Oy/Jari Laurikko - TS-yhtymä, CC BY 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5734219>.

**Figure 4.** Turun Sanomat, Turku, Alvaro Alto

Hitchcock’s conclusion of the exhibition was precise, “The new edifices presented in the exhibition represent the valid architectural style of the day, and that this style is just as unified and inclusive as the style of earlier epochs in art history such as Gothic and Baroque” [9]. He described the works of architects like Otto Wagner, Peter Behrens, and Frank Lloyd Wright as “half modern.” He rejected vehemently the functionalist theory of many architects, instead points to the essential difference between architecture and construction, emphasizing the artistic nature of modern architecture.

For Johnson, much of his achievements were as a result of Mies Van der Rohe’s earlier influence. He believed in Mies’s box of spaces, skin of glass, anonymous facades, and the highly edited structural expression. He saw them as the ingredient of a universal architecture. To them, he added some modification. Stern [1] wrote on Johnson, “His approach to design has always been an urban one; eclecticism of his shapes, no matter how eccentric, and even excessive, is always rendered insignificant by his exact sense of sighting and his ability to organize complex programs in a clear manner.



**Figure 5.** showing the skyline of central Lagos



Figure 6. Central business district of Lagos

#### 4. Characteristics of International Style

- Structures lost their social and cultural contents.
  - Structures of this era looked visually weightless, as a result of the wide use of glass and steel.
  - Achievement of “*free plan*” devoid of so many wall and demarcations.
  - Achievement of “*free facade*,” which means that windows can run from one end to another without interrupting walls or structural members. In fact, length-way windows (*finneton long*) mostly in horizontal arrangements were mostly used.
  - Rectilinear plans (especially rectangles) rather than circular plans were mostly favored.
  - Pitched and protruding roofs were avoided; instead parapet and flat roofs were preferred, encouraging the introduction of roof terraces and concrete fascias.
  - There was a general use of cantilevering and projecting eaves on roof terraces and upper floors.
  - There was no form of hard artistry or embellishment on walls and surfaces. In extreme cases, they made do with soft arts.
  - Frame structures rather than load-bearing walls dictated the aesthetic value of the building and the limits to space allocation.
  - There was a conscious attempt to integrate buildings on the physical terrain without changing or altering much. In fact, buildings were designed to marry the topography.
  - Engineering considerations replaced aesthetic and functional ideals. Adoption of more technical processes and simple detailing in design approach.
  - Reduction in the time of construction. Easy to erect structures at a record time (mostly used prefab materials).
  - Reduction in the cost of construction.
  - Development of *democratic spaces*, using flexible plans that can easily be changed to other functions.
  - International style accepts versatile arrangement and varied results for different building types.
  - It was not a conformist architecture as different forms are used which were mostly in contrast to traditional ideals.
- Avoidance or reduction in the use of masonry internally and externally.
  - It was anti-climate, which makes it demand sophistication and extensive endo-climate controls, like air conditioners, heaters, expellers, driers, electrical lighting and more.
  - It adored standardization.
  - Psychologically, buildings lost their privacy and feeling of security as most spaces are see-through.
  - It preferred monochromatic painting (especially white) more than multi-colored painting of spaces.
  - Lintel instead of arches became the preferred way of spanning openings and ordinary distances.
  - International Style adored sparse furnishing to dense furnishing.
  - It does not recognize hierarchy of building types.
  - 90° angles both on plan and elevation were preferred except for staircases and a few other elements.

#### 5. International Style and the World

The name *international* implies a wide acceptance around a region or the world over. How much this architecture lived up to its name is yet to be evaluated. So, how popular was international style? Or better put, how international was international style of architecture? The designers of this architecture tried to create a style devoid of any political, cultural, religious or geographic undertones. How much they achieved this is debatable. The success of the style perhaps lies in the choice of material (iron, glass and concrete) which can be sourced locally all around the world. The failure of the style was in not envisaging the effect of political environment on its ability to spread. In Russia, China, Czechoslovakia, Poland, they opposed vehemently any capitalist inspired reforms and ideas. Selling of international style to those areas would have been more difficult than selling ice in the arctic. It comes to reason that George Howe's believe in politics not interfering with architecture has been proven wrong in the case of international style. In United States and Canada, the architecture was easy to gain acceptance considering that they were the originators and the world was looking up to America for leadership. Buildings sprang up here and there wearing the characters of this style, like the United Nations building in Chicago, Toronto Dominion Bank Tower, the Seagram building and many more. South America was slower in imbibing the ideals of the new movement as most of the region was still under the grip of colonialists. It was not surprising that Brazil became the first to start using the style on a grand scale. This was informed by the countries plan to have a new capital built on the theories of modern architecture as such, international style came in handy and was used on a large scale for the building of the new city. An architect named Niemeyer Oscar proposed a more organic and sensual international style making him one of the great contributors to the new capital city Brasilia. Other cities like Lima, Buenos Aires started erecting in trickles structure that bore the characters of this style.



Figure 7. Picture showing Central Lagos

International style spread throughout Europe and the rest of the world as a result of expelled architects of this school from Stalin controlled Soviet Union. This was part of Stalin's reply to the growing influence of the west. The post war Europe was experiencing political turmoil on the fronts of Soviet Union and America. Most modernist architects who were of European and American extract left earlier for Russia in search of the Golden Fleece. They helped rebuild the war torn cities around the Soviet Union and invented low-cost houses on the model of modern architecture. As the feud between Kremlin and White house grew, these foreign architects were expelled from U.S.S.R. Some of them were Bruno Taut, Hannes Meyer, Mart Stam among others. They ran to Germany and were equally rejected by the government. They found refuge in countries like France, Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, Kenya, South Africa and India. Perhaps, this was one of the breakthroughs of the style as these architects propagated the theories in any new city they went to. As Europe and the rest of the world looked to America for leadership and help, *international style* became their architectural gift as the *Marshall plan* was their economic gift to capitalist Europe.

In Israel, European Jewish settlers who came with ideas from the west built on the sand dunes of the middle east structures in the form of international style. They took the advantage of absence of any established style to put up structures in the principles of modern architecture, laying precedent for the rest of the Arabian world who were stoic about their heritage.



Figure 8. Picture showing Lagos skyscrapers modeled after International style

In Africa, apart from traditional house forms, colonial architecture dominated the landscape. The economic declines, freedom and independence struggle and perhaps communication problems of the time delayed the early application of international style in both domestic and public buildings. More importantly, most colonialists were busy with the job of propagating their home country ideals. It would have been contradictory for them to push any other agenda. Little wonder Africa and other colonies could not boast of a single international style building in the early twentieth century. It could be argued that the creators of this style intended it as a futuristic architecture for third world countries. If not, how can we explain why classical and ecclesiastic styles were the civic and domestic architecture of these colonies? The closest Africa came to modern architecture was in a few adulterated Arts and Craft buildings (what I will call *Afro-arts and craft*) scattered across the Gold coast, South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and some parts of North Africa. One would have expected that International Style will sell easily in these regions considering the cost and ease of erecting these structures. Another issue was that the style relied majorly on artificial means for lighting and ventilation. In reality, most third world countries could not afford these utilities all the time and everywhere. Also, open plan of the International Style will not go down well with cultures and religions who are use to formal demarcations in the context of space use and sex.

South Africa, West Africa, Kenya and later Zimbabwe were the early users of this style, a little later than when it was popular. South Africa was one of the first because of its early romance with the west. In North Africa, modern architecture and international style spread across Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and the rest. It was a lot easier for the north to accept this style because of their age-long mastery of the skills of blowing glass and foundries. These structures resembled on a higher scale the simple savannah rectilinear structures with flat roofs. Prucnal-Ogunsote [8] identified International style to mean high rise buildings portrayed by the term high-trop and housing for the low-income group referred to as low-trop architecture. She believes that more than one-third of modern buildings in Nigerian urban centers belong to the international style. Rikko L.S and Gwatau D. [10] identified some Nigerian architecture and were careful to place modern Nigerian architecture as architecture brewed from Europe during the post war era, eschewing traditional materials like brick and relying on new materials like reinforced concrete, glass and steel. They believed that the success of International Style only came to bare in Nigeria in the 50s and above.

Asia was skeptical in accepting this style. The divide between socialist and capitalist economies was becoming more pronounced. Also, most of the Asian states were practicing one form of isolationism or the other and as such vehemently opposed western ideologies. The temptation brought about by the new materials (concrete, glass and steel) forced a lot of states to develop ideas related to the international style, but retaining some of those intricate traditional oriental elements.

## 6. Criticism of International Style

Like all architecture, the international style has its merits and demerits. It received much criticism from people around the world. Its first problem perhaps started with the choice of name. Long before International style came into reckoning, Frank Lloyd Wright never recognized any architecture as being a style. He (Frank) later dismissed the choice of name, international style as unacceptable and branded the style as the new eclecticism and an easy formula that anyone could copy. Bruce Allsop, an author and architecture critic also rejected the use of the word *style* and termed it as very degrading.

International style had no respect for traditions in architecture typology. Albert Khan and anti-modernist George Baired lashed it as architecture without human feelings. Khan criticized the principle as an attempt to make all category of structures look like factories. He saw no sense in the elaborate use of flat roofs, large glass surfaces, white walls, freestanding columns, horizontal windows for all types of buildings. In fact, he saw earlier works of Gropius and asked, "Is it architecture at all?" Robert Venturi was of the opinion that modern architecture was insensitive to the lives and values of those it purported to serve. They exported this architecture to all nooks and cranny of the world without considering the local material culture and social institutions of the people. In terms of material development, international style achieved a lot. It dematerialized architecture. For the first time in the history of architecture, materials seemed to have a universal language. Hadid M. [11] described modern architecture from the point of introduction of new materials and techniques which gave the designer more freedom in dealing with forms, functions, interior spaces, elevation, heights, and buildings started to be more obedient to having different elements. Some of the elements that are conspicuous in contemporary designs are the use of balconies, openings like arches, lintels, glazed surfaces, cantilevers, plain walls and then colors. They developed an architectural image of extended smooth planes and sharp cubic volumes relieved of the tyranny of bilateral symmetry. They insisted on flat roofs even in climates where it was impossible to prevent the sipping of water from it. Stern [1] wrote about Johnson, "his approach to design has always been an urban one; eclecticism of his shapes, no matter how eccentric and even excessive, is always rendered insignificant by his exact sense of citing and his ability to organize complex programs in a clear manner". British architect-historian, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner said, "To me what had been achieved in 1914 was the style of the century. It never occurred to me to look beyond. Here was the one and only style which fitted all those aspects which mattered, aspects of economics and sociology, of materials and function. It seems folly to think that anybody would wish to abandon it".

International style divorced architecture from social purpose; housing was treated indifferently as if working for a communist government. It did not recognize the hierarchy of building types. It rejected functionalism and promoted form. Architects stopped bothering about the relationship of buildings to its climatic and environmental setting because artificial means like the use of heaters, air conditioners can be relied on to correct any discomfort.

Ambiguity, surprise and delight in architecture were disregarded as irrelevant and circulation as a primary social function of architecture was also undervalued. The stark, unornamented appearance of this style has made it to be described as inhuman, ugly, colorless, sterile and elitist. Emerging third world countries were eager to accept the gift of foreign architecture as evidence of arriving in the international political scene Leland M.R [12]. This augured well with the plan of the originators. After all, the designers intended it to be for all class of people and regions. Whether international style achieved this world view is very questionable. Its purity of style, transparency and gayness is usually eulogized as some of its strength. For some school of thought especially the conservatives, that was its greatest weakness. They argue that architecture should not turn us to nudists.

Pearlman Hugh, an architect of the 60s simply saw it as another style and regarded those architects still copying it as specie of revivalists.

Whatever school of thought one belongs to, it is clear that International style more than any other style projected its image and ideals far beyond the borders of America and Europe, within a very short time as the originators intended.

## 7. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, international style failed and succeeded in many ways some of which were not very clear until so many years after its demise. It is difficult to measure the success or failure of international style and any other in empirical terms, judging by the elusiveness of tools for such measures. When using modules like time and space, technology, material and social events like people's response, cultural and social effects and so on, one can draw a conclusion that International style quietly but gradually swept through most parts of the world like no other architecture style.

One thing was clear, and that is the architecture was an idealistic one. They believed that tearing down city slums and erecting beautiful structures` will eradicate poverty. Experiments over the years on city growth have shown that there is more to it than just getting rid of the poor or pretending they don't exist. The truth remains that those cities cannot survive without the poor. After all, who will do the dirty jobs?

For the originators of this style, they made a bold attempt to see to a universal architecture devoid of regional, cultural, material and spatial barriers. Posterity will judge how much they succeeded.

## References

- [1] Stern R. (1969). *New Direction in American Architecture*. George Braziller Inc. 1 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016. p42.
- [2] Allsop B. (1960). *A general History of Architecture*. Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons Ltd, London p208.
- [3] Bruno, T. (1919) *Alpine Architektur*. Hagen.
- [4] David Hadlin P. (1991). *American Architecture*. Thames and Hudson. p 209.
- [5] Osasona C.O and Hyland A.D.C (2006). *Colonial Architecture in Ile-Ife*. Book Builders, Ibadan.

- [6] Scheebart Paul (1914). *Glasarchitektur*. Berlin in Le Corbusier (1927) *Machine a Habiter: Towards a new Architecture*, New York p 203.
- [7] Batur, A. (2005). *A Concise History: Architecture in Turkey during the 20<sup>th</sup> century*. Cizgi Basim Yayin Ltd Sti Istanbul p 30.
- [8] Prucnal-Ogunsote B. (1993). *Classification of Nigerian Architecture*. Department of Architecture, Federal University of Technology, Akure.
- [9] Henry R. H and Philip. J (1997). *The International Style*. W.W Norton and Co ISBN 0-393-31518-5.
- [10] Rikko L.S. and Gwatau D. (2010) *The Nigerian architecture: The Trend in housing Development*, *Journal of Geography and Regional Planning* vol 4 (5) p273-278.
- [11] Hadid Mouhannad (2002) *Architecture Styles Survey in Pakistan Territories*.
- [12] Leland M. R. (1993) *Understanding Architecture; its elements, history and meaning*. P480.