Let us consider an object. Our first reaction is, of course, the result of how the object affects us. And what I call character is the effect of the object which makes some kind of impression on us.

To give a building character is to make judicial use of every means of producing no other sensations than those related to the subject. In order to understand what I mean by the character or expected effect of different objects, let us take a look at some of the beauties of nature and we shall see that we are forced to express ourselves in accordance with the effect they have on our senses.

What a charming spectacle delights our eyes! What an agreeable day! How pleasant it is! The image of a good life extends over the whole Earth! Nature is bedecked with the charms of youth and is a work of love! Sweet harmony reigns over all our impressions on such a delightful day; and its charm intensifies the colours and our senses are drunk with their freshness, their delicate nuances, their smooth, rich tones. What a pleasure it is to run our eyes over all these things and how agreeable they are; their adolescent forms have a je ne sais quoi that emphasizes the smooth curves that barely indicate their presence and adds new charms. The beauty of their elegant proportions lends them grace and unites in them all things that have the gift of pleasing us! [...]

Good taste is a delicate, aesthetic discernment with regard to objects that arouse our pleasure. It is not enough to simply put before us objects that give us pleasure. It is when we choose among them that our pleasure is aroused and we feel delight in the depths of our being.

Let us concentrate on architecture and we shall see that here Good Taste consists of providing more delicacy than opulence, more subtlety than strength, more elegance than ostentation. Thus it is grace that is indicative of Good Taste.

We have observed that during the summer season the whole of nature is bathed in light which produces the most magnificent effects; that this life-giving light was diffused over an extraordinary multitude of objects all with the most beautiful forms, all shining with the brilliance of the brightest colours, all of them developed to the full; and that the result of this beautiful assembly was a vista of magnificent splendour.

As in nature, the art of giving an impression of grandeur in architecture lies in the disposition of the volumes that form the whole in such a way that there is a great deal of play among them, that their masses have a noble, majestic movement and that they have the fullest possible development. The arrangement should be such that we can absorb
at a glance the multiplicity of the separate elements that constitute the whole. The play of light on this arrangement of volumes should produce the most widespread, striking and varied effects that are all multiplied to the maximum. In a large ensemble, the secondary components must be skilfully combined to give the greatest possible opulence to the whole; and it is the auspicious distribution of this opulence that produces splendour and magnificence.

It is just such expanded images that I have tried to produce in several of my projects, notably the Palace at St. Germain-en-Laye, the Metropolis and Newton's Cenotaph. I have tried to avail myself of all the means put at my disposal by nature and to convey with my architecture the image of grandeur. I would suggest that the reader consult my plans in place of all possible explanations, for I am persuaded that what should be required of an Artist above all is not that he explain well but that he execute well.

We have observed that the smiling images of autumn were produced by great variety, by the play of light and shadow, by picturesque forms and their lack of similitude, by the unique and bizarre nature of their variegated, mottled colours.

It follows from these remarks that if we are to produce gay, smiling images, it is necessary to be familiar with the art of diversification; for this one must depend on flashes of inspiration for they make objects new, different and more stimulating, and diversify design. They utilize picturesque forms so as to disguise and individualize them. They make light play on shadow to produce stimulating effects that by skilful mixing produce mottled colours; through fortunate, reasoned analogy, through slender, graceful proportions, they give architecture an aspect of lightness. By ingenious combination and unexpected progressions they create unexpected vistas that proffer the stimulating attraction of novelty. This type of architecture would be suitable for Vauxhalls, fairs and health spas which almost always have picturesque locations, for a Theatre with pleasant surroundings, or agreeable public promenades, such as Boulevards, etc., etc.

We have observed that during the winter season, the light is sad and gloomy, that everything has lost its brilliance and its colour, that outlines are hard and angular and that the denuded earth has the appearance of an all-embracing tomb.

It follows from these observations that to produce a sad, sombre impression, it is necessary to try to present, as I did in my funerary monuments, an architectural skeleton through the use of an absolutely bare wall2 and to convey an impression of buried architecture by using only low, sagging proportions buried in the earth; and, finally, by using light-absorbing materials, to create a black image of an architecture of shadows outlined by even darker shadows.

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1 Boullée is here alluding to the Vauxhall in London, the pleasure gardens, built by Jonathan Tyers in 1728, which gave their name to the Paris equivalent, the "vauxhall d'été" of 1785. On the London history of this park cf. W. Kent, An Encyclopaedia of London; on Paris A. Babeau, Paris en 1789, Paris 1889. Also Topographie Historique du Vieux Paris 1866ff.

2 The interest in the essential appears in the statement of the aesthetic value of the "nude" wall.
This type of architecture based on shadows is my own artistic discovery. It is a new road that I have opened and, if I am not mistaken, Artists will not refrain from following it.3

I will add one last observation to those I have already made—one that seems to me of great importance. It is that nature never deviates in its forward march, and everything in nature is striving towards the goal of perfection. Does Nature offer us agreeable images, noble images, pleasant images, sad images? In all its different images nature retains the individual character of things in such a way that nothing is in contradiction, neither impressions, nor forms, nor colours; and all things in all respects have a perfect relationship, perfect analogy and harmony.

3 The architecture of the shadows, which means the enhanced aesthetic effect by means of lighting rather than of ornament is one of the elements in Boullée's art which reveal him as a precursor of contemporary tendencies. Boullée was alive to the emotional associations which this type of architecture tends to suggest.