Form and Content in Contemporary Architecture - Issues of Style and Power

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Summary

Architecture, the craft of making buildings, has been reduced to an alliance of taste and capital, of art and profit, of style and power. Contemporary architectural practice is, we contend, an alienated practice: form torn constantly from content; the aesthetic negated, reduced to looks, dressed up as Art. This, the taken for granted orthodoxy of architectural thought must be opposed, resisted. Such resistance is rooted in the concept and practice of craftsmanship, in the fusion of pleasure and work - an overcoming of alienated labour.

Résumé

L'architecture, dont la fonction première est la construction de bâtiments, est devenue un mélange de goût et de capitaux financiers, d'art et de profit, de style et de pouvoir. La pratique de l'architecture contemporaine est une pratique aliénée: la forme est constament séparée du contenu, l'esthétisme est nié, réduit à des apparences érigées en oeuvre d'art. Il faut s'opposer, résister à cette orthodoxie que l'on croit aller de soi dans la pensée architecturale. Une telle résistance est basée dans le concept et dans la pratique du métier, dans la fusion du plaisir et du travail - une victoire sur le travail aliéné.

1. Introduction

> "... *aesthetic*, with its specialized references to art, to visual appearance, and to a category of what is 'fine' or 'beautiful' ... is an element in the divided modern consciousness of *art* and *society*: a reference beyond social use and social valuation ... there is something irresistibly displaced and marginal about the now common and limiting phrase 'aesthetic considerations', especially when contrasted with *practical* or *utilitarian* considerations, which are elements of the same basic division." (Williams, 1976, 2)

Boom time. We are on the move, back on course. We're lean, efficient - competitive. De-regulated, privatized, rationalized - we're all entrepreneurs now.

Managers are managing, governments governing - the centre holds. Each of us a little merchant prince (princess?). The democracy of property. And, it seems, we ain't seen nothing yet. There's more, lots more. Up here in the superstructure it's all systems go - we have lift off. We're free of engagement, of struggle, of hope - it's a fun time. We've done with modernist solemnity, piety, social commitment; we're into clowning, we're Post-Modern. In architecture we're into sit-com: 'ironic columns (Silvetti, 1980, 26-27), Chippendale skyscrapers (Banham, 1984, 25-29), Palladian country seats (British Architecture, 1982, 201) ... all this and the unending search for origins, for imperishable models - the Primitive Hut (Delevoy, 1978, 14-22), the Tabernacle in the Wilderness (Terry, 1982/83, 5-14), the Orders of Classicism (Chitham, 1985)... It's Renaissance time again:

> "... it is time to resurrect the principles by which classical Greece operated ... proportion is not a matter of individual taste but depends on mathematical laws of harmony which can only be broken at the expense of beauty. We have been led, I suggest, for long enough by those who totally ignore the laws of harmony and the well tabulated relationship of the parts to the whole. Rhythm, balance and equilibrium have been missing too long ... a new Renaissance in architecture." *Charles Windsor, Prince of Wales* (Pawley, 1986, 21)

> "In both art and architecture the tradition of Post-Modernism is beginning to mature and we can see limited progress and development akin to that of the Renaissance." *Charles Jencks, Commoner* (Jencks, 1986, 48)

The impressarios of beauty are at it again: the pedlars of harmony, balance, proportion - those worn-out precepts - are dusting off the classics. The manipulators of taste are freeing architecture from efforts to change the world. Aesthetic form is being emptied of social content. Post-Modern maturity is upon us.

When exactly were the beacons of Post-Modernism fired? When did we find ourselves in the light, released from the grey of modernity? These are no easy questions. When precisely does culture emerge from primordial slime? Here - uniquely perhaps - there is witness,

> "Happily, we can date the death of modern architecture to a precise moment in time ... Modern Architecture died in St Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3.32 pm (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks, were given the final *coup de grâce* by dynamite." (Jencks, 1981, 9)

Jencks, of course, is not alone in his fixation: the Pruitt-Igoe housing project has become *the* icon of anti-modernism, the ready-to-hand symbol of what all, apparently, recognize as the failed Modern Movement [1]. For adherents of this, the new orthodoxy, the project has been drained of social content, its particularity ignored, its occupancy by-passed, its history overlooked, its reality denied - its image celebrated. Form is all, paramount. Happily, we can go beyond this, we can refer to the issues that preoccupied the US Public Housing Administration, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the National Institute of Mental Health, the Social Science Institute of Washington University (Rainwater, 1973; see also Yancey, 1976, 449-459).

[1] Jencks, 1981, 9, "this ruin has become a great architectural symbol"; see also Colin St John Wilson in Dostoglu, 1984, 13. For a critical view of this facile depiction of Pruitt-Igoe, see McLeod, 1985, 8-9.

Happily, we can turn to the unique history of Pruitt-Igoe; to, for instance, the Supreme Court's rejection (as unconstitutional) of the city of St Louis' plan to build "two segregated projects, Pruitt for Negroes and Igoe, across the street, for whites". The scheme, occupied eventually by blacks alone, was soon notorious for its poor design (e.g. the lifts stopped only at every third floor) and for the publicity given to crimes and accidents on the site. And there is more. Happily, we can look to, say, Rainwater's informed account of life behind the formal image:

> "... Pruitt-Igoe ... is not ... typical of the lower-class world; no other public housing project in the country approaches it in terms of vacancies, tenant concerns and anxieties, or physical deterioration. Rather, Pruitt-Igoe condenses into one 57-acre tract all of the problems and difficulties that arise from race and poverty and all of the impotence, indifference and hostility with which our society has so far dealt with these problems. Processes that are sometimes beneath the surface in less virulent lower-class slums are readily apparent in Pruitt-Igoe." (Rainwater, 1976, 1-3)

All this is missed in the Post-Modern critique:

> "Pruitt-Igoe ... consisted of elegant slab blocks fourteen storeys high with rational 'streets in the air' (which were safe from cars, but as it turned out, not safe from crime); 'sun, space and greenery', which Le Corbusier called the 'three essential joys of urbanism' (instead of conventional streets, gardens and semi-private space, which he banished) ... its Purist style, its clean, salubrious hospital metaphor, was meant to instil, by good example, corresponding virtues in the inhabitants." (Jencks, 1981, 9)

Formalism, the currency of architectural thought, pervades modern as well as post-modern discourse; indeed, it saturates comment on the modernist 'heroes' and their work. Take, for example, an icon of the modern movement, the twin towers of the Lake Shore Drive apartments (Chicago 1948-51) designed by Mies van der Rohe. Here, attention focuses disarmingly on the appearance of the buildings, on their visual impact, on, that is, 'aesthetic considerations',

> "... masterpieces of precise engineering, devoid of any ornament, or of qualities (such as those arising from the effects of the weather or from the varying textures of natural materials) that cannot be exactly controlled. They rely for their aesthetic effect on subtlety of proportion and mechanical precision of finish." (Richards, 1962, 110)

> "The initial wall/column articulations ... were here elaborated into a modulated facade which was subtly related to the Suprematist, pinwheeling juxtaposition of the two blocks ... more than in any other work by Mies, the wall is rendered here - after Semper's prescription - as a woven fabric; a subtle integration of structure with fenestration that displays the same capacity as load-bearing masonry for limiting any extension of the space." (Frampton, 1980, 234)

> "The Lake Shore Apartments are more austere than Lever House {a 'Miesan' office building designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill} ... Lever's aquatic greens and blues threaded with silver are likely to be more appealing than the dull black and matte silver of 860 Lake Shore ... In the uncompromising severity of Mies' rectangular towers, however, we instinctively feel ourselves at the fountainhead. If Miesian-like formulae are legion, Mies' own greatest buildings reveal the singularity of genius." (Jordy, 1986, 237)

All this misses the point. What is salient about the Lake Shore apartments is that the architect furnished an effective aesthetic for corporate capital, world-wide. He provided an architectural type, an image of the profitable fusion of visual elegance with new production techniques,

> "This rapid assemblage from prefabricated parts made the Lake Shore apartment towers economical buildings, costing from five to ten per cent less than comparable apartment buildings." (Jordy, 1986, 249)

> "You know he is a genius, and not only that, I can build him $2 less per square foot than any other architect." (Prak, 1984, 20)

This, of course, is not proper to architectural discourse. As everyone, especially an aesthetics expert, knows,

> "It is the exterior that counts, the opposed towers made of the magnificent bluntness of their enclosing grids" (Jordy, 1986, 251)

We are at the core of architectural orthodoxy - repression of social content. We are at the heart of architectural theory, criticism, practice - preoccupation with form. We are at the source of architectural fashion - the parade of 'styles', of 'movements', of 'isms' (Frampton, 1982, 60-83). Shallowness is all the rage. No sooner read than forgotten, E.M. Farrelly's The New Spirit warrants special mention (Farelly, 1986, 7-16). Here, in a farcical rerun (that skips readily over the tragic), the very essence of Constructivist practice, its emancipatory thrust, is mislaid; lost to disjointed montage, written and pictorial. Fortunately the grasp of others is more sure,

> "Soviet architecture and town planning of the 1920s was suddenly brought out of oblivion to become fashionable ... Soviet Constructivism ... was a product of the specific technical, economic, financial and, above all, social and political circumstances of its time and place ... what is most interesting ... is the attempt that was made to create an environment for living corresponding to the society that the 1917 October Revolution wanted to build - the correlation between architectural policy and social policy." (Kopp, 1985, 6-7)

2. Architectural Style - the Aesthetic as Alienation

Efforts to separate form from content in architecture are but particular instances of the more general divorce of culture from society, of art from everyday life. This split between art and daily life is rooted in alienated labour; in, that is, the divorce of pleasure from work. This, the taken for granted orthodoxy of architectural thought, must be opposed, resisted. Such resistance is embodied especially in the work of William Morris, who forged a theory that was at once a critique of and an alternative to his, and our, times.

For Morris, architecture is the quintessential art, an expression of pleasure in work, an art "made by the people for the people as a joy for the maker and user" (Morris, 1944, 545). This he asserted in the teeth of all he saw about him; in opposition, that is, to soulless work, to the degrading experience of alienated labour:

> "... the greatest of all evils, the heaviest of all slaveries; that evil of the greater part of the population being engaged for by far the most part of their lives in work, which at the best cannot interest them, or develop their best faculties, and at the worst (and that is the commonest, too) is mere unmitigated slavish toil, only to be wrung out of them by the sternest compulsion, a toil which they shirk all they can - small blame to them. And this toil degrades them into less than men: and they will some day come to know it, and cry out to be made men again, and art only can do it, and redeem them from this slavery; and I say once more that this is her highest and most glorious end and aim ..." (Morris, 1944, 552)

Morris rejected especially the prevailing reality of his - and our - times, the separation of labour from pleasure, of work from art. Beauty for him arises from, stems from joy in labour,

> "Yet I repeat that the chief source of art is man's pleasure in his daily necessary work, which expresses itself and is embodied in that work itself; nothing else can make the common surroundings of life beautiful, and whenever they are beautiful it is a sign that men's work has pleasure in it ... it is the lack of this pleasure in daily work which has made our towns and habitations sordid and hideous, insults to the beauty of the earth which they disfigure ... (Morris, 1962, 140-41)

A romance, the innocence of a Victorian socialist? Hardly. Now as then architecture as a joy for maker and user remains beyond reach, remains a repressed hope - for building workers on the lump, for factory 'hands' on the line, for typists in the pool ... for architects at the drawing-board, "pandering to degrading follies for the sake of profit, wasting their intelligence and energy in contriving snares for cash in the shape of trumpery which they themselves heartily despise" (Morris, 1944, 649). Few find creative pleasure in their work or in its use. Architecture continues to rest on alienated work, "those externals of a true palace of industry can only be realized naturally and without affectation by the work which is to be done in them being in all ways reasonable and fit for human beings" (Morris, 1944, 649). Hardly an apt description of our local car assembly plants - those that remain. Here, as elsewhere, workers refuse the products of their own labour and counsel others to do likewise. Continually Ford workers tell us "never buy a Ford ... we know what goes wrong with them because we know we don't care how we do the jobs ... it's a funny feeling riding along in something you really hated when it was a shell on the line" (Beynon, 1973, 109-112).

Motorcars or buildings, it's all the same - it's the look that counts. The burnished, thrusting bodies of cars, the beguiling looks masking the pain and loss of production, the joyless labour of the assembly line; the neat facades of corporate architecture, its enticing look concealing the alienated social relationships of daily life, "the crispness of the external face is everything it is cracked up to be, but the view of this skin from the inside is somewhat ordinary - and perhaps even a little crude ... {This} disjoint between the interior and the exterior {reflects} ... the management's opinion that those looking out have less sensitive eyes than those looking in" (Campbell & Kay, 1977, 401). This, certainly, was not Morris' vision,

> "... our factory which is externally beautiful, will not be inside like a clean jail or workhouse; the architecture will come inside in the form of such ornament as may be suitable to the special circumstances. Nor can I see why the highest and most intellectual art, pictures, sculpture, and the like should not adorn a true palace of industry. People living a manly and reasonable

life would have no difficulty in refraining from over-doing both these and other adornments ..." (Morris, 1944, 654)

Culture and society, art and everyday life: Morris refused these distinctions and the banal division between works of art and mere artefacts which they support. He refused to accept as desirable, or necessary, a world in which culture is privilege, art is luxury; in which the makeshift is commonplace,

> "I must ask you to extend the word art beyond those matters which are consciously works of art, to take in not only painting and sculpture, and architecture, but the shapes and colours of all household goods, nay, even the arrangement of the fields for tillage and pasture, the management of towns and of our highways of all kinds; in a word, to extend it to the aspect of all the externals of our life."

> "... those things that are without art are so aggressively; they wound it by their existence." (Meier, 1978, 395-396)

The wounds remain. Indeed, the 'commercialism' of Morris' time has matured, swollen into the luxury and into the obsolescence of consumerism - producing goods, architecture, intended either to fall out of fashion or to fall apart.

Architectural practice is, then, an alienated practice: form torn constantly from content; the aesthetic negated, reduced to looks, dressed up as Art. All this has come to the boil again, notably in the commotion surrounding 'type', 'typology', 'archetypology'. These arcane notions, disinterred from the Enlightenment, are on offer as a new, a post-modern way forward. They set the "conditions for a contemporary architectural practice" (Delevoy, 1978, 16); they are "at the forefront of the cultural debate ... impossible for architectural commentators to ignore ... " (Bandini, 1984, 73); "the concept of typology pervades, consciously or unconsciously, almost all architectural thought ... " (Silvetti, 1980, 23).

There are, we learn, two typologies; one a product of European rationalist thinking, the other of Anglo-American pragmatism. The former turns on the work of an eighteenth century Encyclopaedist, on Quatremere de Quincy's neo-Platonic distinction between type and model,

> "... the word Type presents less the image of something to copy or imitate completely, than the idea of an element which itself has to serve as rule for the Model. The Model, in the sense of the practical execution of art, is an object which has to be repeated as it stands. The Type is, on the contrary, an object on the basis of which everyone can conceive works which would not resemble each other" (Delevoy, 1978)

This idealist abstraction was resurrected for contemporary architectural consumption by Argan in 1962. Since when the ambiguity of Type, acknowledged by each of these theorists, has been take up, celebrated - used, indeed, as a foil for the 'scientific precision' of Typologists [2]. Here, patently, is a doctrine ripe for exploitation: available, simultaneously, as a license for hedging intellectual bets and as a "scientific methodological tool" for instructing designers, for indeed ordering "an artist's creative process". More. Typology, Type is trans-historical as well as trans-cultural, "a meta-

[2] Bandini, op. cit., p. 74; the citations in the remainder of this paragraph are culled from Bandini, op. cit., Argan, op. cit., and Moneo, 1976, 1-34.

historical constant", "something constant, it is what remains beyond the particular and the concrete" - architecture treated as static artefact, beyond historical process or lived experience. And more. Type, we are informed, transcends use, function; it is "independent of the functions ... which ... buildings must fulfil". Yet more. Architecture has been gutted, reduced to "a heritage of images with ... ideological overtones". Form is all, paramount.

Characteristically, the conceptual niceties of Type and Model do not weigh on English speaking pragmatists. Untroubled by the rigours of Grand Theory, they go right to the heart; for them Typology is,

> "... only a convenient repository of authoritative imagery waiting to be transformed by personal creativity ... a collection of easily appropriated icons." (Bandini, 1984, 81)

And Type is, pragmatically, a "concrete, idiosyncratic, and temporal icon ... a purely iconographic interpretation and use of the idea ..." (Silvetti, 1980, 24).

Archetypologists - European-rationalist or Anglo-American pragmatist - seek to rationalize the alienation of architectural practice, to legitimate the existence of architecture as High Art. On social, political engagement they have nothing to say save disdain for past aspirations, for emancipatory hope.

3. Craftsmanship, a Resistance

The concept and practice of craftsmanship carries us beyond this taken for granted alienation, this wrenching of form from content. Craftsmanship is central, a symbol of the fusion of pleasure and work, an overcoming of alienated labour. Here, as before, we follow William Morris.

Morris was affronted by much of the 'civilization' about him; not least by the division, the rupture of art from work, of artist from worker, of designer from builder. He believed that we all have it in us to be creative. Creativity, he held, is not the preserve of artists alone, "that talk of inspiration is sheer nonsense, I may tell you that flat ... there is no such thing, it is a mere matter of craftsmanship" [3]. For him, craftsmanship entails fellowship; expressly the collaborative making of Gothic architecture,

> "In the times when art was abundant and healthy, all men were more or less artists; that is to say, the instinct for beauty which is inborn in every complete man had such force that the whole body of craftsmen habitually and without conscious effort made beautiful things, and the audience for ... art was nothing short of the whole people." (Morris, 1973, 61-62)

> "... from the first, the tendency was towards ... freedom of hand and mind subordinated to the cooperative harmony which made the freedom possible. This is the spirit of Gothic Architecture." (Morris, 1944, 484)

[3] Morris in Meier, op. cit., p. 398; we have not been able to find a suitable, non-sexist substitute for the word craftsmanship - Morris, we imagine, would not have looked.

Little of this spirit remained in Morris' world. Craftsmanship, the bedrock of creative work in fellowship, was being undermined, subverted - was splitting. The majority, their craft skills denied them, were now operatives employed at "useless toil", at "the making of wares which are necessary to them and their brethren *because they are an inferior class* ... wretched houses ... miserable makeshifts ... ". A minority, denied socially useful labour, were engaged in "the puffery of wares", employed in "making all those articles of folly and luxury, the demand for which is the outcome of the existence of the rich non-producing classes" (Morris, 1973, 91-92) - an effete art for a ruling class in decline. Craftsmanship, the fusion of beauty and use, was being destroyed: the majority were being deskilled, a minority had become trapped in folly and luxury - a denial of social need.

Wretched houses, the puffery of wares, by-words of ugliness and inconvenience - familiar affronts to our times. We live now, all too evidently, with the drab uniformity of much public housing; with the soulless, sleek office blocks or our city centres; with the shoddy nastiness of most factories. We live with homelessness, overcrowding and with unemployment among construction workers; we live with dilapidated, run-down local amenities and with the strained opulence of newly-developed commercial centres; we live with condemned houses, boarded-up homes - reminders of expedient, get-it-up-quick housing quotas. Our lives are weighed down, daily, by denial of social need; creativity has been yet further suppressed, deskilling has intensified:

> "The medieval craftsman was free on his work, therefore he made it as amusing to himself as he could, and it was his pleasure and not his pain that made all things beautiful ... and lavished treasures of human hope and thought on everything that man made, from a cathedral to a porridge-pot. Come, let us put it in the way least respectful to the medieval craftsman, most polite to the modern 'hand'; the poor devil of the fourteenth century, his work was of so little value that he was allowed to waste it by the hour in pleasing himself - and others; but our highly-strung mechanic, his minutes are too rich with the burden of perpetual profit for him to be allowed to waste one of them on art; the present system will not allow him - cannot allow him - to produce works of art." (Morris, 1944, 596)

Maudlin regret? Romantic discontent? Medieval nostalgia? We refuse these banal depictions, these parodies of the ideals and practices of craftsmanship. For us such ideals embody a way of life as well as a style of work: a life in which the now commonplace separation of labour from leisure, of work from culture is transformed; a life in which people work freely - they control how they work and what they work on; they see the whole process, they can imagine the completed products - details do not become detached; work is not drudgery but imaginative exploration, a creative activity pervading the lives of users and producers,

> "As ideal, craftsmanship stands for the creative nature of work and for the central place of such work in human development as a whole. As practice, craftsmanship stands for the classic role of the independent artisan who does his work in close interplay with the public, which in turn participates in it." (Mills, 1974, 383)

This, apparently, has little to do with architecture, nothing to do with Architecture. So, at least, we learn from Demetri Porphyrios, a messenger with whom, periodically, news arrives from the summit of Grand Theory (Porphyrios, 1984, 30-

31). The word is, building and architecture are quite distinct. And Aristotle (in his *Poetics*), Horace (in *Ars Poetica*) with, of course, the familiar Quatremere de Quincy, agree - we know this because Porphyrios tells us. 'Building' is the craft of construction, it "comprises the knowledge and experience that man accumulates in dealing with the contingencies of providing shelter". 'Architecture' stretches beyond the everyday, the mundane; it "refers to the *art* of building (*l'art de bâtir*) ... the product of an artistic intention, not, like building, of necessity". The lesson is clear: craftsmanship and art are divorced, eternally,

> "Over the years and centuries, a few chosen building solutions acquired a natural authority as truths. Such is the power of habit and consensus that soon this select number of building solutions became universal laws ... {such} building solutions - like that of the gable - are responsible, in the first instance, for the invention of form. Man, in contemplating these forms, recognizes in them the cumulative knowledge, experience and genius of his species and thereby wishes to commemorate them. At that very moment, those select building solutions drop their use value and assume an aesthetic, symbolic value ... building becomes architecture." (Porphyrios, 1984, 30)

In short, the art of craftsmanship and the practice of art, architecture, are repressed[4]

Form is all, paramount. Architectural aesthetics have been reduced to the manipulation of formal effects: architects - the stars, those that count - are revered either as technological virtuosi or as the legatees of gentlemanly scholasticism. So, "the most expensive building in the world" (Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, designer Norman Foster) is, we are told, "essentially a crafted building", a product of "purpose-made, 'High-Tech' ... *craftsmanship*" (Architectural Review, 1986, 35, 60). Here, architectural vision, control, is total:

> "... every important element ... was designed and developed from scratch ... with factory-based specialists ... Each ... was the subject of a research and development programme just as if it were a car or an aeroplane. Mock-ups and prototypes were built, tested, altered and tested again until their performance and quality met with the architects' approval." (Architectural Review, 1986, 82)

All is subordinate to architectural intention, to artistic direction - the very antithesis of craftsmanship, of creative work in fellowship. But, of course, it looks good,

> "As the ferry approaches the island terminal, another unexpected aspect of the Bank reveals itself: the lightness and grace of the building. Certainly, the macho aspects ... exist, but the Bank also has a powerful, detailed, subtle delicacy, like a beautiful female athlete. This blend of masculine and feminine is one of the many apparent contradictions that make the Bank a truly great building." (Architectural Review, 1986, 36)

Architectural grandees, the historicists, also worry at form. Their vision, however, takes a different turn. Like their champion, James Stirling, they display their learning, they parade their erudition, they advertise their culture. So at the Neue

[4] For a similar rupturing of architecture from building, see Krier, 1984, 55-84.

Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart (designer James Stirling) we find a "work full of parodies ... references to past influences", "brilliant conceit", "very high-level architectural jokes", "ironic identification"; we stumble across "coquettish attention to ... urban surroundings", "architecture ... condensed to its essentials"; we come across "legitimizing eclecticism", "vaguely Klenzian overtones", "suggestions of *Rundbogenstil*", "a Gothic provenance", "literal evocation of Giulio Romano", "the recurring archetype of the Pantheon", "the legitimate cravings of the German soul" (Architectural Review, 1984, 21, 30, 33, 35). We are in the midst of architectural scholasticism made marketable, crafted.

Meanwhile the rest of the profession is troubled ...

4. Fading Away, Stylishly

Crisis - the contemporary condition of architecture. Crisis: we can't run our practices, we're bungling the contracts, clients are disgruntled - bring on the organisation theorist, the management expert; people don't understand our buildings, we're not communicating - enter the environmental psychologist, the social scientist; suddenly energy's expensive, we don't know how to conserve it - here comes the building technologist, the environmental scientist; we're overwhelmed by data, we can't handle the information - welcome to the computer programmer, the systems analyst; the market's hot, the competition blistering, profits are down - roll up, roll up to the School of Business Studies. It's been blow upon blow. And it's getting worse: services engineers, structural engineers, quantity surveyors, interior designers, town planners, package dealers - the Barratts, the Wimpeys ... they're moving in on us. We're going under.

What, then, are architects to do? Some, a handful, resist - they refuse an architecture of embellished technicalities,

> "Immediately you start thinking in terms of form, you dissipate the idea of there being people involved, and it becomes impossible for it to be architecture ... start without a building and try to look at what the problem is first. The people you are working with have a common problem and the solution is the building ... The building's shape as such is not important, but the fact that it so aptly complements its function, is. This ... is what architecture is about." John Scott, Architect [5]

Function? Resistance?

Functionalism as a formal device is, of course, passé; with its instrumental, its mechanistic bias, it constituted the cornerstone of International Style dogma. As current, everyday practice however, it flourishes. Its adherent treat of people as manikins, puppets: they treat of architectural space - a scarce resource - as a technical issue, a matter for traffic-flow, for circulation analysis; they reduce issues of social power to questions of spatial planning - 'problems' to be designed away [6].

Functionalist doctrine is profoundly reductionist, a denial of the open, generous modernism that marked, say, Soviet Constructivism, the early work of Frank Lloyd

[5] in Dalzell, 1977, 23; see also Hannay, 1984, 49-59 and Blundell-Jones , 1986, 64-69.

[6] For an extented analysis of instrumental functionalism, see Harris and Lipman, 1980/81, 135-147.

Wright, Le Corbusier in his better moments... For them, as for John Scott and others who resist, functional design is recognition of a social need - functional architecture is social architecture. Consider, as a case in point, Constructivist proposals for housing. Now as then these demand a departure from, a transcending of taken for granted, bourgeois 'commonsense'. Now as then they require, as a first premiss, a shift from private to communal property - "freed from the shackles of private land ownership" (Lissitzky, 1970, 204). Now as then they call for a questioning, a transformation of gender relationships ("a waste ... out of tune with modern life to see the function of woman in terms of lifelong cooking and dusting, when she should be contributing both physically and intellectually to the common good, using her free time to cultivate both body and mind", Lissitzky, 1970, 194). Now as then they rest on the reallocation of resources ("the equitable distribution of all communal functions, for everybody's equal enjoyment ... nurseries, kindergartens, schools, stores, laundries, ambulances, hospitals, clubs, cinemas, and other facilities should be apportioned in such a manner as to be within a comfortable and functionally optimum distance from the dwellings", Lissitzky, 1970, 198). Such proposals, in short, constitute a resistance - an opposition to the persistent alienation of form from content. Now as then ... some resist.

Others - the majority, the star-struck - have been overwhelmed; mesmerized by the pageant of fashion, in the thrall of architecture as ART,

> "Architecture is not an integument for the primitive instincts of the masses. Architecture is an embodiment of the power and longing of a few men. It is a brutal affair.... It is a weapon. Architecture ruthlessly employs the strongest means at its disposal at any given moment ..."

> "Architecture is not the satisfaction of the needs of the mediocre, it is not an environment for the petty happiness of the masses. Architecture is made by those who stand at the highest level of culture and civilization, at the peak of their epoch's development. Architecture is an affair of the elite ... The shape of a building does not evolve out of the material conditions of a purpose ... Architecture is purposeless. What we build will find its utilization." (Pichler & Hollein, 1970, 181-182)

Art, opiate of the architectural masses, soul of soulless conditions, heart of a heartless world - the sigh from the drawing-board. Grubbing about for commissions - on the golf course, at the club; sweating it out in the office for speculators, hucksters and others on the make; begging for the fee, pleading for your due, suing for the dough ... dreaming all the while of Art.

Architecture, the craft of making buildings, has been reduced to an alliance of taste and capital, of art and profit, of style and power,

> "Who built Thebes of the seven gates?
> In the books you will find the names of kings.
> Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
> And Babylon, many times demolished
> Who raised it up so many times? In what houses
> Of gold-glittering Lima did the builders live?
> Where, the same evening that the Wall of China was finished
> Did the masons go? Great Rome
> Is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them? Over whom

Did the Caesars triumph? Had Byzantium, much praised in song
Only palaces for its inhabitants? Even in fabled Atlantis
The night the ocean engulfed it
The drowning still bawled for their slaves.

Bertold Brecht,
'Questions for a Worker who Reads'
(Brecht, 1976, 252)

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