

# ARCHITEXT

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## ARCHITECTURE AND FILM

Dane A. Johnson

Form and substance are the obsessions of the architect: space and light his passions. To explore them and come to grips with them, he burrows away in well-lit warrens where he often generates a type of tunnel vision. His scope is narrowed and he may lose sight of the fact that architecture is successful only when it is responding to a variety of artists and social sensibilities. This is why the architect must observe and understand the wealth of artistic forms that surround him. Painting, literature, music and dance may all clarify our obsessions and passions. The film medium, however, draws on all of these and in a particularly immediate and contemporary manner may illuminate our concerns better than any other medium.

Form in cinema may be physical or literary. In the work of Fellini and Bergman we see emotional or intellectual ideas expressed in purely formal ways — the riderless horse or deformed child in "La Strada" — and in reality the form shapes our reactions. The same effect, albeit in a different context, occurs in the American musical film. "Singin' in the Rain" or "Top Hat" use the forms of dance and song to communicate ideas. These films are not substantive: the emotions they explore are simple. Yet they are expressed in physical manifestations that transform their realm into a pure realization of feeling.

Substance in film is an issue that may not find its beginnings in the camera, but on paper. The substance in a film is found in the writing, the concept, the generator of ideas. Its expression on film is the work of the director and actors; and they must respond to its guidelines. The screwball comedies of the '30's and '40's, such as "Bringing Up Baby" or "The Awful Truth", depend

largely on situations of the characters' anxiety. These are created by the writer. Alfred Hitchcock took this same type of situational structure and worked the camera to heighten the effect. He was able to fuse the ideas of form and substance into powerful and exciting works. This too is the goal of the architect, to take his intellectual or conceptual notions and use his tools to shape them into physical forms which embody the ideas.

The artistic handling of space and light are what really make film come alive, which is also true of architecture. The filmmaker can create space with light and turn light into form. The interaction of these is what gives film its particular urgency. Recent European films such as "Mephisto" (Hungary), "das Boot" (Germany), and "Diva" (France) contain customarily powerful images of space. The spaces are critical to the story and are expressive vehicles, such as the claustrophobic U-boat in "das Boot". The filmmaker must negotiate and modulate these spaces in a manner which should be of concern to architects. There is a real understanding of space and its particular capabilities in these films. Compare the apartments and lighthouse in "Diva" and it will be understood how acute the filmmaker's understanding of space is. The same is true of the contrast of shallowness and depth, and grandeur and squalor in "Mephisto". There is much study of expansion and contraction of space here, of light and dark, of the finite and infinite.

Without light there is no film. There is an absolute dependence here from which architects may profit. Directors such as Fosse ("Cabaret"), David Lean ("Doctor Zhivago"), and Steven Spielberg ("Close Encounters") paint the screen with light. Is it irrational to compare the modulation of space in light that Le Corbusier achieved at

Notre Dame du Haut, with the animated, almost spiritual, quality of "Close Encounters"?

It is a profitable and necessary exercise for the architect to look beyond his own discipline and draw from others. The study of film draws upon the technological and artistic juxtaposition present in a relatively new art form. Perhaps it is time to more fully embrace such new forms as areas of study for architects. There was a time when we built temples for movie-viewing. Now may be the time to make the pilgrimage and really understand why. We can only benefit. ■

## EDITORIAL

Robert J. Farley

Architecture is expression and statement. The simple physical activity of building does not demand that the builder have a philosophical attitude from which built form is distilled. The evidence of this freedom to build surrounds us in structures that speak only of their immediate material existence and their lack of any guiding conception. Architects predictably scorn such building because as designers we know that form possesses qualities that transcend physical dimensions and mechanical composition. Form and space are expressive of humane intentions.

It remains true that, like any other activity practiced by people, architecture is characterized by diversity. Architectural expression can base its philosophical foundation on anything that the architect holds as meaningful. Appropriateness becomes a matter of temperament, instinct and judgement. Possibility obscures the clarity of right and wrong.

Universal harmony in such a condition of subjectivity is impossible. This does not mean that confusion is the only alternative. The diversity of choice available to the architect as an artist enriches the art form. As architects our desire should be to communicate and exchange varieties of opinion and belief, not to eliminate contradictory influences from our experience. The purpose of ARCHITEXT is to encourage this type of dialogue.

Often, the greatest enlightenments in architectural education occur outside of the classrooms and studios. Architecture is a vital and evolving entity that demands participation. The formation of informed, philosophical attitudes is essential to an architect. Architectural journalism allows this to happen by presenting ideas and expanding the opportunity for contact with these ideas.

Allow this editorial to stand as an invitation to the talent and intellect represented by the School of Architecture to submit work to ARCHITEXT. The editorial staff and writers welcome opinions, criticism, articles, ideas and questions. ■

#### THE IMPACT OF ARCHITECTURAL JOURNALS ON AMERICAN ARCHITECTURAL ATTITUDES 1900-1917

Mark J. Wilson

For Americans at the turn of the century, the huge influx of immigrants from Europe to America between 1900 and World War I served as the latest reminder of the European traditions originally established and constantly reemphasized in America. Architecture was among the most obvious examples of America's wholehearted embrace of European tastes and lifestyles.

America during the nineteenth century had little choice but to learn from European architectural thoughts since none per se existed in America. America did not even have a full-fledged architecture school until Massachusetts Institute of Technology began its program in 1865. MIT and other American schools taught architecture under the auspices of the Beaux-Arts tradition.

Through the early twentieth century, Americans accepted guidance from the French

school. During this same period, however, general acceptance of Classical architecture began to be questioned.

American architectural journals of the period shed some light on this transformation of attitude. The two most responsive and comprehensive journals were The Architectural Record and the Journal of the American Institute of Architects, first published in 1913. Both featured European as well as American work and included critical essays on the issues and ideas of the day. Common practice during the period in the periodicals included the encouragement of reader participation. Dialogue between architects from month to month was frequent.

The fact that there was reader participation and professional discussion in the magazines may be enough to assume that they were an accurate measure of the thinking of the day, and undoubtedly influential in the creation and definition of an architectural consciousness.

Weighing the contents of the journals suggests that the body of American architecture ignored any radical turn away from Beaux-Arts education. Before WWI only a handful of articles investigated a break from the Classical tradition. Infrequency does not imply insignificance, as much as it does the debatable, radical nature of the issues.

The June, 1907 issue of Architectural Record featured an article by George Maher, an Illinois architect, entitled, "A Plea for an Indigenous Architecture". His architecture was characteristic of the Prairie School, and not surprisingly he noted that, "It is logical to expect in nature a product indigenous to its soil and climate". Contrary to the prevailing notion that edifices like the Boston Public Library and Pennsylvania Railroad Station were "strongly American in style; he argued that these buildings "do not in the least represent an American art and civilization."

Architectural Record in the following issue challenged Maher's call for an indigenous architecture; an American vernacular. They expressed the overwhelmingly popular, conservative viewpoint that America already had a vernacular architecture which

painstakingly evolved from American conditions and European traditions.

Even as late as 1915, E. Raymond Bossage in the Journal of the American Institute of Architects maintained that American schools were still in their infancy; "the period of borrowing and assimilation not complete". His argument centered around the fact that, originally, American schools had no one who could teach design. Their only alternative was to import Frenchmen from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

In an article entitled "Architectural Responsibility", Albert Skeel addressed the problems of American education convincingly. Describing the average young man's desire for architecture, he commented: "He deludes himself with clever drawings of the architectural forms of the past, rather than to present the vital modern problems of today".

The importance of this statement is twofold. First, it mentions the delusion of architectural renderings from the Beaux-Arts tradition. In 1913, J. Stewart Barney criticized the Beaux-Arts design process for its neglect of the inherent problems of a given program, emphasizing instead a well-proportioned plan. Second, Skeel refers to the "vital modern problems of today". If the majority of American architects were still not willing to abandon the stylistic trappings of classicism, they were willing to deal with social issues like public housing. Referring often to the suburban housing projects in Great Britain, the Journal of the American Institute of Architects included in almost every issue an article dealing with contemporary urban problems. Skeel added: "The architect must be willing to socialize himself."

With remarkable foresight Skeel suggested, "We have come to a time when applied architecture or decoration does not suffice. I believe we have arrived at a period approximating the early Romanesque. We are feeling around and blundering along on a new path."

The conditions resulting from the World War showed clearly in the minds of Americans the need for an architecture responsive to social needs of the time beyond mere artistic statements. Two articles in the Journal of the

American Institute of Architects illustrate the mood.

In the July, 1916 issue Frederick L. Ackerman emphasized in "The Relation of Art to Education: Part III", the social and spiritual in architecture as opposed to the traditional rules of composition taught at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. And in "The Architect and His Education", January, 1917, F.H. Bosworth asked if there was an American architecture that embodied the American people and their lifestyle. He speculated that the student should analyze a problem by studying the future, by approaching the social needs of architecture. "The history of architecture becomes no longer the study of examples, more or less interesting and more or less beautiful, but an all-absorbing study of social and economic causes with their resultant architectural effects."

While periodicals excluded modern European architecture (as we define it today) from their pages, except for the Art Nouveau movement, the above statements possess the unique flavor of contemporaneous, modernist manifestoes.

I have purposely selected a direction that suggested there was at the time a movement, be it ever so small, which coincided with the ideals of European modernism. It seems these ideals only exposed American architects to the future rather than actually influencing their attitudes. For the most part, as simple perusal would indicate, American journals concentrated on classicism. Not for several more years would American architecture deny its colonial heritage. ■

WHO DUNNIT ?!?

Kathleen Yatooma

Many students living at the student apartments are screaming "foul play" because their only public meet and greet area (the lobby) has been taken away from them and replaced with an apartment manager's office. This lack of public meeting space is heightened by the fact that the student activities building is located completely across campus.

Upon entering the apartments, instead of seeing a half-brick wall to your right

beyond which was located an open lobby area with four chairs, there is a full wall with double glass doors. The doors lead to a combination reception/waiting room area and behind the receptionist's desk is the manager's office. The area has been furnished nicely, and Heidi Wenner, the manager of the apartments, said that the waiting room can be used as a lobby by the tenants when the office is open. This doesn't seem very likely, however, since the space is enclosed and looks very business-like.

There are those here on campus who would say that this type of move on the part of the administration is just indicative of a prevalent attitude they hold towards the students. Otherwise, the students would be consulted before any decisions affecting them were made or at least consideration would be given in letting them participate and give input to the final decision.

The battle between students and administration is an on-going and healthy struggle comparable to the battle of the sexes (let it never end). But when it appears that certain rights are infringed upon by either party, the violating party must be called to task.

President Marburger wants the students to know that administration is most sympathetic to their feelings and is more than willing to work with us. He specifically cited the instance where students from SC/AIA were instrumental in getting the school to install the traffic light on 10 Mile Road. He said wherever it is practical and time permits, he will work with the students so administration and students alike can benefit from the experience.

In the case of the renovation at the student apartments, the conversion of the lobby to a manager's office was initiated two years ago. The fact that there is a waiting list of people wanting to reside in the building, coupled with the fact that the lobby was not used, led to the decision to convert the space. The old manager's office, apartment #107, has already been leased. It is a one-bedroom apartment and, according to Heidi Wenner, the most popular apartment style.

There was also vandalism in the lobby. This vandalism only served to defeat the whole purpose of the building which is

to provide inexpensive housing to LIT students. Jack Armstrong, Director of Campus Facilities, pointed out that the vandalism may not have been done by the residents but perhaps by guests who were waiting in the lobby area. So the function of the space was questioned and the decision to alter it was confirmed.

The next question, obvious to any architecture student, would be why the School of Architecture was not called upon to participate in the alterations. So I called upon Jack Armstrong and asked him. He said that when this was first considered, they did go to the School of Architecture and Harold Linton was asked to submit drawings on enclosing the space. The drawings were done by a student, who is now a senior. The original drawing, however, had the space enclosed in glass and the student was not told the space he was designing was to be a manager's office. In fact, he believed he was designing an enclosed space to be used by the residents. So the passing of time and a break in communications brought about the resulting manager's office that you now see.

An interesting post script to this article is that President Marburger has invited the Architecture and Interior Architecture students to submit design solutions for the apartment building that would discourage any further vandalism in the public areas that are left. He suggested the use of colors, signage, acoustics or any other innovative ideas that would be helpful in keeping the costs of maintenance and repairs down. If you would like to pursue this type of project, contact Jack Armstrong in the Campus Facilities Office. And, keep this Who Dunnit story in mind when you tackle the job. ■

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT:  
POET OR POLITICIAN?

Dane A. Johnson

Frank Lloyd Wright, like the chameleon, had many colors. Wright can be viewed as a poet or a political activist; and his buildings speak to both of these. Were these aspects intrinsic? Or were they created during a career filled with journalistic exposure? We know of the commitment of Wright to an organic

architecture, and of the amazing forms which grew from this commitment. What we may have misread, however, is the political motivation of this architecture. The work of Frank Lloyd Wright stands as a true American architecture; but this is not an exclusively retrospective attitude. The goal of Wright was to create an American, democratic architecture as a response to the dehumanizing architecture he saw emanating from Europe. Ironically, the ideologies he fought most strongly against are fundamentally linked to his own.

Wright as the poet is the concept most strongly rooted in our minds. We perceive his architecture as addressing "man's spirit as well as his body, speaking like poetry to the soul, awakening it to the intangible, yearned-for beauty that all men seek." There can be no question that these qualities exist in the buildings that Wright built in his organic architecture. The fact remains, however, that amidst the spirituality, there is an aggressive quality to the buildings. In line and material they blend with the landscape; yet their forms are bold and assertive, by no means secondary to their surroundings.

The poet must be blended with the practitioner. Wright does not stand as a giant due only to the spiritual nature of his work. The key to his stature was in the way he synthesized the various aspects of architecture. Wright's structural innovations are so great, in fact, that they may be overlooked when confronted with the architecture they support. The forms of the buildings, their grace and inherent tensions, seem so natural in place that we rarely question how they were created.

How Wright combined the practical and poetic aspects of his designs is a monument to his genius as a designer and a politician. As a thinking person, he was wise enough to understand the trends of his time. He knew he had to grasp the new industrial technologies and triumph over them. Wright was shrewd enough to realize the possibilities of technology not as debasing technique, but as uplifting theory. His integrity as an artist allowed him to use machinery as a tool. His works speak clearly to the fact that he was able to adapt to new attitudes; but there was an urgency to this adaptation.

Wright had gone through lean years in the 1920's. The 1930's held for him a chance for greater advancement of his theories. Coming out of a period when his ideas had been considered antiquated, Wright seized the ideas of machinery as a chance to push his work into a new and different realm. The Poet becomes the Politician.

As a writer, Wright had always been equipped with a skill and passion which made his words seem like gospel. After his re-emergence in the 1930's, there were added tones of democratic fervor in his words. Wright saw his goal as not merely to create an organic architecture, but an American architecture, both spiritually and politically.

Many of Wright's writings contain not so much architectural theory as political doctrine. Ideas expressed by the architecture of Wright such as freedom, shelter, space and intimacy are no longer merely organic but democratic and American. He is responding to political and architectural trends, as well as pride within himself and exploiting the characteristics he discovers.

Wright's interpretation of the role of the machine is interesting. He is obviously responding to trends in Europe and more importantly Le Corbusier in Towards a New Architecture. Yet, despite his assertions to the contrary, Wright shares many attitudes with Le Corbusier. Foremost among these is a concern for the quality of human life, a concern thought by many to be lacking in the work of Le Corbusier.

The perspectives of the two men differ greatly, with Wright assuming the long-lived stance of American freedom. This is really what Le Corbusier is aiming for; but he realistically sees that is cannot be achieved in Europe in the same way as in America. The relationships are fascinating and contradictory.

Wright uses form, materials, site and ornament to create unity - a key goal in his work. Is this contradictory to Le Corbusier? Le Corbusier says "there must be a unity of aim in the work of art"; and we can see that it is really a matter of technique which separates the two men and their work. When Wright uses the machine to mold natural materials into an organic form, is he being more honest than Le Corbusier

using the machine to create a building that recalls said machine? Are the pure white walls of Le Corbusier more dehumanizing than the all-wood or brick walls of Wright, or is it merely a matter of taste?

Both men deal in abstraction of form to fulfill a theory of what and who architecture should serve. The answer is that men must live in their houses; and their minds must be free and uncluttered - the representation is not the key to the idea. In his search to form a particularly American, democratic architecture, Wright may have shown that in reality ideas of freedom and space are not inherently American. In his search for humanity, he had confused humanity with political systems; and time has shown us that rarely may these two be joined. The works of Le Corbusier, and movements such as the Bauhaus for that matter, were not so much a representation of a political attitude as they were a response to or refusal to accept such attitudes. Perhaps Wright proved his theories by showing the universal quality of the human spirit while trying to glorify the American political system.

Frank Lloyd Wright was decidedly an enigmatic figure in society; and he reveled in the mystery surrounding him. He strikes us as arrogant, intelligent, poetic, driven. Primarily, however, he was a creative genius who was able, in his work, to bring together these contradictory characteristics into a unity of purpose expressed in unity of form. ■

#### RICHARD SERRA AT THE DIA

Jean LaMarche

Richard Serra, important contemporary sculptor who is currently teaching at Yale University, spoke recently about his work to a large audience at the Detroit Institute of Arts. His totally oral presentation combined the reading of a recent article he wrote for a Yale publication with asides and explications as they occurred to him. This was followed by an extensive period of audience questions.

Serra's discussion of his work centers around three main issues: the balance through gravity of extremely heavy planes of metal; the experience of movement in relationship to

the piece; and the specific context of the site. The context of the site informs people what they should look at. Serra claims that sculpture in public or corporate sites, however, is undermined by the 'morality' of the building or company. This is the main reason that he attempts to find 'neutral' sites for his work although he is quite aware of the fact that there are no purely neutral locations.

When he finds an acceptable location for which he will generate a piece, he attempts to 'redefine the boundaries of the site.' This makes his work site specific, and, in a sense, contextual. What makes public or corporate commissions unacceptable, apparently, is the very context which they create. The values expressed by such architecture and such urban spaces tend to deny individual freedom, a context, apparently, in opposition to Serra's idea of the role of the sculptor.

Part of the problem may stem from the involvement of the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts). One wonders whether there is any way that such a large bureaucracy can support any art except that which is essentially conservative, established, and 'acceptable'. In fact, that is the essence of the problem that has faced civil control of arts at all times. Art produced through this kind of patronage today raises very serious questions concerning the role of art in our culture. Is art, like sculpture, merely to 'prettify' an empty, alienating, urban space? Or is it supposed to provoke thought? Can anyone seriously argue that it can do both?

Serra's adamance about remaining 'at large' as a maverick sculptor clearly defines his idea of the role the sculptor must assume in the modern world - that of the avant garde. One wonders, however, taking Robert Hughes' point in *Shock of the New*, whether or not an avant garde is even possible. If not, then Serra is part of the inertia of Modernism. Regardless, Yale University has bought it. No one can deny the refreshing qualities of individualism that his behavior and opinions demonstrate. It is the dream of individual freedom that eludes us in our everyday world, perhaps, that causes us to identify with and support displays of individual behavior, even violent behavior. Perhaps

what we seek in art is not Beauty but the expression of rebellion.

Richard Serra's presentation, nevertheless, has revived the problems concerning the role of art and the artist in culture, especially the relationship between art and architecture. These problems have been resolved more effectively during some periods in the past. The romantic attempts of the early modernists to address architecture as the mother of all the arts, however, did not incorporate the other arts, but rejected them. It has been left to us to decide this delicate and difficult issue. ■

## CITYSCAPE DETROIT

Matt Hubbard

Cityscape Detroit is a non-profit, volunteer organization of people who share a concern for the development of Detroit's built environment through lectures, tours and other activities.

Cityscape Detroit was founded in 1980 and it evolved from the People for Downtown Hudson's. This original group of 20-25 interested individuals has grown to a present membership of around 100 paying members. Most of the members have a design background and an interest in Architecture. Mike Kirk is employed at William Kessler and Associates, and is the President of Cityscape. Students from LIT, U of D, and Wayne State are also members. Cityscape is the only open forum which holds regular discussions pertaining to Architectural and urban issues and the Image of Detroit.

Some of the issues and activities Cityscape has been involved in include Environmental Impact comments offered constructively concerning the Central Business District and Riverfront West (the new housing area being constructed near Joe Louis Arena). Most recently, the group provided very interesting comments concerning the American Natural Resources and Stroh's riverfront projects. Cityscape has attracted interest from Detroit Renaissance and New Detroit as well as the Central Business District Association (CBDA). Unfortunately the Detroit Planning Commissions are very secretive about their plans and

are not interested in Cityscape comments or suggestions. SEMTA became interested in the group when Cityscape commented on the Downtown People Mover and has had occasional contact with the organization.

In October, 1982, Cityscape assisted the CBDA-sponsored 80th Anniversary of the Wayne County Courthouse, by conducting tours and serving refreshments to the visitors. Brian Hurtienne, LIT 5th year student, SC/AIA Tour Director and Cityscape member assisted in the research of the building as well as conducting tours.

When Brian was asked about his opinion of the organization, he replied that it was a great organization and it is open to any form of Art and Architecture discussion. He also stated that at the time it is not influential enough to achieve some of its goals but as the public becomes more aware of its existence he's sure these goals will be achievable. When questioned about the role of students in Cityscape, Brian's response was that they can help in many ways including research, tours and any type of donation. He also stated that the organization was a great opportunity to establish contacts with professionals.

The membership secretary, Marilyn Florek, spoke with great enthusiasm when asked about the role of Architecture students in the organization. She believes that student involvement will do much to increase the public awareness of the group and Detroit. She mentions a possible Design Competition open to students and a possible spring tour to be conducted from the observation deck of the Penobscot Building. Another project of interest is a proposed mural in the newly completed WDIV building on Lafayette Street with Detroit Architecture as the subject.

Patience Young, Curator of Education at the DIA, and past president of Cityscape, states that any donation of time by a student would be very beneficial and appreciated. Some areas that students could help with include tours of local buildings for other special interest groups, and research of Detroit's history and its Architecture. Both Patience and Marilyn suggested that any new ideas concerning monthly lectures, projects and other activities are very helpful.

Cityscape Detroit holds its

meetings on the first Monday of each month at 7:00 pm, on the 2nd floor of the David Stott Building, at State and Griswold on Capitol Park. For meeting agendas and other information, see the Cityscape Detroit bulletin board across from the SC/AIA Commons. ■

## ITALIAN RATIONALISM

Piero Gabucci

Perhaps more than any other movement in modern architecture, Italian Rationalism has been overlooked, possibly because of its relationship with the Fascist government it generally received its commissions from, or its short life from the 1920's to the early 1940's. It could possibly have been overlooked because of Italy's rich architectural past. The Italians had difficulties approaching the new art for the essential reason of "the weight of tradition". Italian Rationalist architecture has been labeled boring, modest and less than innovative. The Rationalists never took full advantage of the new materials (prefabricated steel, brick, etc.) provided in the 20th century. Whatever the reason for its early demise, we cannot ignore its existence or contribution.

Italian Rationalism pays homage to the modern masters, Gropius, Mies, Behrens, and was heavily influenced by Vers Une Architecture by Le Corbusier, published in 1923. This came three years before the birth of Italian Rationalism, begun by Gruppo Sette in Milan, led by Giuseppe Terragni.

They found themselves trying to establish a "middle ground" between the theories of the Futurists led by Antonio Sant'Elia, and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (who rejected all forms of classical revivalism), and the Milanese Novecento led by Marcello Piacentini (who supported Revivalism and monumentalism). What the Rationalists stood for was a new architectural theme; the search for clarity, order and honesty in materials and the rejection of Revivalism, thus acknowledging the ideas of Frank Lloyd Wright in America as an inspiration. They attempted to synthesize the Italian nationalistic values of its classical past, and the structural logic of modern times.

The principle concerns of a

Rationalist architecture as articulated by Le Corbusier and Gropius were; housing problems, the urgency of urban planning, rigorous rationality of architectural forms, technological standardization, production in series, and industrialized production influencing social progress and the democratic education of the community. For a group that was supposedly socially conscious, however, it designed very little in low-cost housing. Thus begins the criticism against the Rationalist movement. They designed more monuments, upper-income housing, stadiums, and industrial buildings. The Rationalists realized there was little prestige in designing low-income housing. Government commissions for monuments and private commissions for elegant bourgeois homes provided greater attention for future clients. However, the lack of such projects forced the Rationalists in the 1930's to reevaluate their position, and therefore, producing plans such as, Pagnano's 1938 plan for Milano Verde, and Terragni's Quattre Rebbio at Como.

The group also designed few urban projects, except Terragni's Como plan. One of the achievements realized by the group was the use of new methods and materials provided by industry, thus the possibility of social change through technological solutions.

Rationalism faced much greater criticism than for its idealistic failures. It has long been strongly associated with the Fascist Regime of the 1930's. Historians have ignored or avoided this issue dismissing any Fascist celebration in the movement, and studied Rationalist buildings as a style. Early arguments by Italian scholars against Rationalism as a celebration of Fascism included the idea that the architects played Fascist in need of commissions. However, there were those who renounced Fascism in 1942 as did millions of other Italians; the 1930's grouped all Fascism together linking Italian Fascism with German Nazism. Another argument against Rationalism as Fascist is in how one needs to study a building and for what purpose; a building can be studied apart from its "functional" (location, use, patronage) aspects. Accused of celebrating Fascist political ideologies was the movement's

most renounced building by Terragni, Casa del Fascio in Como, 1932-1936, for it served as a vehicle for the Fascists to promote their philosophy. The building allowed for great numbers to meet in a common place, the interior court. However, this is merely an intelligent architectural response to program, and not a political statement.

As previously mentioned, Le Corbusier and his book Vers Une Architecture, especially the last chapter "Architecture or Revolution", had a tremendous influence on the Rationalists. In it he points out that if the masses needed decent housing and were not satisfied they would revolt. Le Corbusier's ideas of hierarchy, creating right states of mind, and order imposed from above for the benefit of all found their way in the 1920's and 1930's, into Mussolini's administration. This is not to say that Le Corbusier was a Fascist of course. However, fundamental concepts were true to both.

The Rationalists were also accused of installing an alien, modern, international architecture in Italy. The Rationalists argued that there existed in their architecture the presence of mediterraneita, an Italian traditional architecture found along its sea. They claimed mediterraneita, the coastal architecture, was the true origin of the modern movement with qualities such as white walls, rectangular or squared. It was the architecture of space, rhythms derived from the use of numbers, the golden mean and Pythagorean rhythms. Their argument suggests that Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Mies adopted mediterraneita. This claim has never been taken seriously or even acknowledged; however, it has never been disproved either.

The Rationalists tried to establish an authentic architectural language in Italy. They related to the methodological principles of the modern movement; searching for a clearly identifiable modern architectural style.

What was the downfall of Rationalism in Italy? What was the use, then, of buildings pleasing to modern taste? Casabella, a leading promotional magazine of the movement, was forced in 1943 to stop publication by order of the government. Terragni dies prematurely at the age of 39,

while others were arrested and deported to Germany where they died in concentration camps. Vittorio Gregotti, in his book New Directions in Italian Architecture, 1968, summarized it best. What had been a "problem of style", became a "problem of death and freedom."

THE ACCOMMODATION OF CHOICE

Robert J. Farley

Choice is not a concept that many architects find easy to deal with. Typical architectural designs are presented as ideal solutions that may have been generated from a synthesis of alternatives, but the solution itself seldom permits choice. Charles Moore asserts that our environments must carry "evidence of choice" implying that choice must continue as an active ingredient in experiencing the building, not simply in designing it.

Jean-Paul Sartre believes that choice is the fundamental indicator of value. As human beings capable of free-will, we express our values and morality through the choices we make. By choosing one course of action or one object over another, we express a greater valuing of that choice than of any possible alternative.

Robert Venturi suggests that life is ambiguous, complex and anxious. He is really saying that conflicts of values exist in everyone's life that provide color and vitality to living, even as they complicate and threaten it. Moore seems to accept this point of view but aspires toward a different expression than Venturi.

If choice represents our faith, belief and assumed truths (as individuals and as a culture), and if these basic values are conflicting and impermanent, then an architecture that eliminates the opportunity for choice will never be universally satisfying. Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier are pertinent examples.

The environments created by both architects are selective and exclusionary. The expression is rigid, controlled, and directed toward a very particular conceptual philosophy. This can be quite satisfying as the mind delights in the localized perfection inherent in this kind of expression. Completeness and

purity are ideals that are shared. They are not always ultimate goals however, and their rigidity can be frustrating. Purity is reluctant to admit change and change is symptomatic of human life and choice.

Venturi would solve this dilemma by gently condemning purity and exclusionary "Modernist" architecture in favor of an architecture that is as tense and transient as experience. Such a conception is perhaps a step in the right direction; toward accommodating the inconsistencies of experience. This is not really a choice although it appears to be so. Instead, it is an opposite. Venturi's buildings are as rigid as Wright's or Le Corbusier's; but instead of refusing to upset their perfect balance, they refuse to resolve themselves. Whereas a Wright house can never be contradictory or ambiguous, a Venturi house can never be pure. To be a Venturi house means to be forever tense and threatened. Despite his attempts to be earthy and banal, Venturi remains as elite as Wright or Le Corbusier. Choice is eliminated in experience of the architecture, unless one simply refuses to live in it.

In The Place of Houses (Moore, Allen, and Lyndon), a plea is made for generosity and accommodation. The authors seem to recognize that life is more than just an expression of tensions, confusion and anxiety, and less than an utopian paradise of order. In promoting an architecture made "...by and for people...bent to clear human purpose", there is an implication that architecture is in part an instinctual and tradition-bound art. Humanity is not limited to a single moment in time. Our lives have as much to do with our accumulated symbols and experiences of the past, and our visions of the future, as they do with the realities of the moment. This multiplicity of influences complicates choice, but it also humanizes it.

An architecture that is receptive to this complete human scenario is a difficult architecture to create. In describing to us what the place of a house should be, the authors allude to this. They discuss the Three Orders: The Order of Rooms (traditions and expectations found in past symbols of home), The Order of Machines (the demands of the moment), and The Order of

Dreams (aspirations and future visions). To assimilate these influences requires an approach more lyrical than functional problem-solving. It involves the creation of experience and diversity of choice.

Unlike Venturi, the authors of The Place of Houses do not believe that ambiguity in life demands transient and uncomfortable architecture. Such is architecture that only considers the immediate moment. Instead, Moore, Allen and Lyndon demand that architecture be "physically rooted to a place". This is vital to human desire as it implies familiarity and a sense of definitive world for the individual.

Furthermore, this environment should be capable of accepting the whims of individuals. To do this effectively while remaining distinct, the architecture must have an enduring quality based in tradition and expectation. This acts as a foil or framework for the passing interests of inhabitants. Architecture must provide energy to transient demands, thereby accommodating choice. It also must be resonant with the physical place and the relatively stable requirements of tradition. Houses can accept the willfulness of their inhabitants without being willful themselves. Architecture that encourages choice and change is promoted over one that provides determined image because choice and change are more permanently valid than image.

Therefore, The Place of Houses attempts to inspire an architecture that is more completely human. It synthesizes the approaches of Wright and Le Corbusier with the attitudes of Venturi. The immediate and incomplete color the permanent and perfect while being supported by them. This synthesis could create a more comfortable house as it is design more closely in sympathy with how human lives are really lived. ■

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