
EDITORIALS

It is particularly appropriate that a student journal of architecture should publish an issue on the theme of architectural education. The articles and interviews which comprise this issue discuss many of the central concerns of formal architectural education: curricula, admission policies, the process of crits, etc. These are difficult questions given the rigorous demands upon the field as it passes through the Post-Modern period and moves towards the developments of the 21st century. That architects should address cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic concerns as well as more specific technical, professional and legal ones imposes an additional degree of complexity to the task of educating students of architecture.

Few, if any, professional studies demand so much from both educators and students nor provides a less certain direction for teaching. Architectural education consequently falls under the continual scrutiny of practicing architects, theoreticians, critics and students.

In light of these circumstances, however, two conditions seem imperative to the well-being of the educational process. The first is the encouragement of a vigorous dialogue among professionals, academics and students regarding the objectives of architectural education and the methods of teaching which can most effectively achieve those objectives. Complimentary to this idea is a second condition; the approach to architectural education by students and teachers cannot afford the luxury of complacency. Too often, these conditions are not met in schools of architecture. Dialogue is limited, contrived or completely absent. Intellectual rigour is lacking among students, lecturers and critics regarding the development of architectural ideas.

Finally, it is regrettable that among the submissions made to this issue, an assessment of architectural education is not offered from a perspective somewhat removed from the educational process itself. It is easy for students and academics to myopically discuss the finer points of formal architectural education when what might be required is the posing of a far broader question: Is a school of architecture the appropriate place to educate the architect?

How different would the results be if an architect's education consisted of a liberal arts background and a practical apprenticeship, with formal architectural education limited to the teaching of the history of architecture? In a time where conflicting demands are being made for a return to a humanist approach to architecture: for increasing technical competence, for the adjustment to computer-aided design, for specialists, and for generalists; it might be appropriate to re-examine the entire validity of formal architectural education and not simply its component faults.

Peter Smale, Editorial Board

Throughout the history of architectural education various schools of thought have chosen to emphasize one medium of communication over another for the expression of architectural designs. It is during this last century that prevailing theory has alternated from a curriculum based on drawing, to one based on building, and once again to one based on drawing.

An often neglected area of architectural education is the perfection of skills based on written and verbal communication. The architect is, today, more than ever, required to present his design proposals and intentions to an increasingly discerning public and not just to an enlightened client or connoisseur. The intelligible manipulation of both the written and verbal components of any language will be of primary importance when dealing with a public, which is most often not skilled in the interpretation of architectural drawings.

The use of the "drawing" as the primary medium for conveying architectural information was extensively used by the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, during the years 1870-1900. Elaborate final drawings constituted the focus of all activities and exercises within the ateliers. Exercises based on the study of light and shade yielded results influential in the representation of light behaviour in two dimensions (paintings and drawings). Attempts to integrate these results into the design and construction of three dimensional spaces were often overlooked.

Similarly, at Columbia University in New York City, under the directorship of William Robert Ware, the use of extensively detailed renderings was an important part of the school's early curriculum. The extent to which the rendered drawing should dominate as the method of expression was consistently debated amongst the school's faculty. Ralph Adams Cram understood that while many graduates were knowledgeable in the creation of beautifully rendered images, few were competent in the design and construction of actual buildings. It was Ware himself who, after having left Columbia, realized that inherent within the established curriculum were faults and deficiencies which often resulted in the "drawing" becoming the final objective of all architectural exercises.

The chief danger to which the architect or the student of architecture is exposed, when he employs this art as a help in designing and building, is obvious. He is likely to regard it not as a means, but as an end in itself, and in doing so he is likely to lose interest in the art of building...¹

The resulting split between the fine arts (painting and drawing) and the building crafts was most acutely condemned in the Bauhaus Manifesto of 1919. Written by the director and founder of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, it proclaimed the end of the academies. The stagnant state of all art education was to be transformed in order to achieve the synthesis of all fine arts and crafts. This ensemble would once again make the building of architecture the essence of design.

The ultimate aim of all creative activity is the building. The world of the pattern designer and applied artist, consisting only of drawing and painting, must at last and again become a world in which things are built.²

The workshop and not the studio was to be the focus of the school. A select few of the architectural avant garde believed that the knowledge derived from the design and "making" of furniture and tapestry, for example, could successfully generate the primary components of a new architectural language. Unfortunately, hindsight has demonstrated that the direct translation of formal and aesthetic relationships, as originally conceived at the scale of a piece of furniture, cannot become the sole guiding principle for the design of a building.

During the past fifteen years the architectural profession has been involved in the re-evaluation of both history and drawing as important components of the design process. This renewed interest in the two dimensional representation of architecture has resulted in schools once more requiring students to master sophisticated techniques of drawing and colour rendering. It is not coincidental that many architects today employ a palette of colours reminiscent of the days of the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

While this renewed indulgence in two dimensional graphic communication may be a reflection of the society's need for visual stimuli, students should be introduced to an aspect of architectural education usually reserved for the occasional term paper or critique presentation — the written and spoken word.

Upon entering a school of architecture great emphasis is placed upon the learning and development of vocabulary and syntax of various architectural languages. This knowledge is most often applied in the graphical representation of architectural designs. Yet the written and verbal languages in which we possess knowledge of vocabulary and syntax are not nurtured to be synthesized with the visual lan-

guages. Can we not incorporate such written and verbal communication into the design process?

The student of architecture would undoubtedly benefit from such emphasis, for at the commencement of every design project, information must be gathered and analyzed (building program, precedents, site analysis, etc.) This information must be intelligibly compiled in order to proceed with the conceptual design phase. It is at this stage that a dialogue must be established between the verbal and the visual zones of the brain such that the collected data may be transformed into architectural ideas and design intentions. Furthermore, one of the most important areas of any architectural practice is the presentation of the proposal to the client, where the assessment of the proposal is most often based on the architect's competence at verbal communication.

At the root of this deficiency is the repeated misinterpretation, both by architects and clients, of the role which words play within the design process. The writing of an architectural essay is most often not interpreted as an exercise in proposed design intentions, where the "experience" of writing, being analogous to that of sketching, can help establish possible design solutions. Most often texts are considered to be the definitive and all inclusive design solution and not simply another tool that the design process offers.

Notwithstanding the above discussion, as architects our primary form of communication should be based on graphic and constructional techniques: sketches, models, etc. These methods aid us in visually interpreting three dimensional spaces and volumes. Nonetheless, attempts should be made in order to synthesize established media with that of the word. The student and the professional can but benefit by engaging in intelligible written and verbal discourse with society and it is within the schools of architecture that the development of such skills should be encouraged.

Notes:

1. *The Making of an Architect 1881-1981*, edited by Ricard Oliver. New York, 1981, p. 19.
2. Frank Whitford, *Bauhaus*. London, 1984, p. 202.

Franka Trubiano, Editorial Board