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# INTRODUCTION

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*A building has to start in the unmeasurable aura and go through the measurable to be accomplished. It is the only way you can build, the only way that you can get it into being is through the measurable. You must follow the laws, but in the end, when the building becomes part of living it evokes unmeasurable qualities. The design involving quantities of brick, methods of construction and engineering is finished and the spirit of its existence takes over.*

Louis I. Kahn

Picture the poor contemporary architect slaving away at his (or her) drawing board, caught between the esoteric *pensees* of *Oppositions* proudly displayed on one side of him and the weighty reality of *Sweet's Catalog* anchoring the other as he struggles to produce the quintessence of post-modern design. All the while he is wondering whether he is Don Quixote jousting at windmills or foreshadowing the artistic trends of the eighties.

Since it tends to be infinitely easier to criticize what other people have designed than to do it yourself, most of the treatises published to date on architectural design are rarely as useful as they could or should be when it comes time for the architect to sit down at his drawing board and actually design. For then he must consciously decide what to communicate to whom, how to do it in the clearest possible way so that it can be read by the intended audience, and how to keep that message from being drowned by the torrent of constraints that inevitably accompany the building process.

Concerned with questions of design, construction, and architecture, this book reveals the various ways in which ten architects synthesize the first and the second into the third. It is a book about values that architects hold about how people should live and interact, about community and privacy, about art and technology. It is a book about the many things that inspire a design, which

range from the pragmatic conditions of a program to idealized prototypical solutions that can be built anywhere at anytime; from sociological notions about how people should use their surroundings to sculptural compositions that present abstracted spatial concepts. It is a book about meaning and what sort of messages can and cannot be conveyed in a building. It is a book about the process of design, about the marriage of aesthetic concerns with structural ones. It is a book about where the architect chooses to lavish his finite amount of tender loving care as well as where the money is spent. And mostly it is a book about the architect as master builder, the person who coordinates all the many people involved in the building process and makes all the critical decisions.

Each of the ten architects who contributed an essay is very much a master builder. Each has a strong design philosophy. Each cares a lot about how his buildings are resolved technically. Each has a philosophy of construction, a framework of interlocking values and viewpoints which form a coherent set of principles involved in directing the formal properties of build, of materials, and of their connections to each other.

Some of the architects, for example, narrowly define the scope of architecture as construction and choose to express the actual making of the building as Richard Rogers does in Plateau Beauborg, where every part is differentiated, defined, and assembled as an erector set in such a way that the process of construction is easily perceived and understood. Others, such as John Johansen, also split buildings into their component parts; those which are more temporary are clipped onto those which are more permanent in an attempt to deal with growth and change. Both architects also prefer to build in steel. But Johansen's work, such as the Mummens Theater, is characterized more by its ad hoc approach to detailing, overlaid with an electrical circuit imagery and a sculptural sensitivity, than by a highly rational approach to construction.

Some architects, like Harry Seidler, believe in

using the building's structure as the primary ordering device and express it as such; they weave the other elements through that in a logical way. A building such as the Australian Embassy in Paris shares with Arthur Erickson's Museum of Ethnology in Vancouver a concrete construction and expression, where the structure defines highly sculptural spaces. Both architects view construction as architecture with a capital A, and both like to generate forms in a primarily sculptural fashion. The difference is that Erickson even candidly admits to giving structure a back seat to consideration of other issues, from siting and aesthetics to user response, while Seidler lets structure predominate over these other concerns.

Another approach is the one that Norman Foster takes; he chooses to minimize visual clutter and refine away the redundant, unnecessary, inefficient parts of the building. This involves searching for the most appropriate technology and rethinking the way that we commonly approach construction. It is also interwoven with a brand of sociological utopianism that Herman Hertzberger might be sympathetic to. One need only compare the virtually identical programs of Foster's Willis Faber Building and Hertzberger's Centraal Beheer: both insurance companies relocating in a suburban town about two hours away from their capital cities, both plagued with employee attrition, and both desiring to make life in the suburbs attractive for their 1,500 workers. While Foster refines away all the extraneous elements, Hertzberger goes to considerable trouble to incorporate as many as he can conceive of into his scheme. By constructing small-scale forms, concrete block nooks and crannies that double as storage units and space dividers, handrails that are also benches, he provides the users of his buildings with elements they can appropriate as their own.

Both Kisho Kurokawa and Fumihiko Maki are seeking ways to combine a cultural tradition with the vocabulary of modern architecture. While they have both been Metabolists and both been

interested in growth and change, Kurokawa is much more interested in the meanings of architecture which are not restricted to rationality, which can relate to Buddhist philosophy, and which are much more difficult to build and infinitely more complicated to read. His architecture veers in the direction of systemized building—of plugging capsules into a supporting core, as in the Nakagin Capsule Tower. Maki's work is much more pragmatic, much more straightforward. He is looking for an appropriate scale for industrialized construction so that it can be an identifiable building module for design at the same time that the module can vary slightly in design to reflect the programmatic variations of the building.

Another way of looking at architecture is as a strictly pragmatic endeavor where the architect tries to synthesize the programmatic requirements into a whole which, as the cliché goes, is more than the sum of the parts. Both Gerald McCue and Cesar Pelli exemplify this almost traditional view of the architect. Both have done many buildings for large corporate clients. Here again, there are fundamental differences, for McCue is interested in a logical conceptual model for his approach to construction so that it is conceptually consistent within each building. Pelli is more concerned with aesthetics. He believes in ready-made, available materials, and his artistic expression is derived from the constraints of the program. McCue's IBM Headquarters is like much of Pelli's work in many respects. It has a slick panelized skin which is painted bright colors. But it is not nearly as molded a form or as instantly imageable as the extruded blue section of the Pacific Design Center.

What characterizes these ten viewpoints is that they run the gamut of design stances. What each architect does is present his own design philosophy and show how it is resolved in one or more recent buildings. This book shows only how divergent the possibilities for shaping buildings are. It does not and cannot offer any definitive conclusions for how design is to be done.