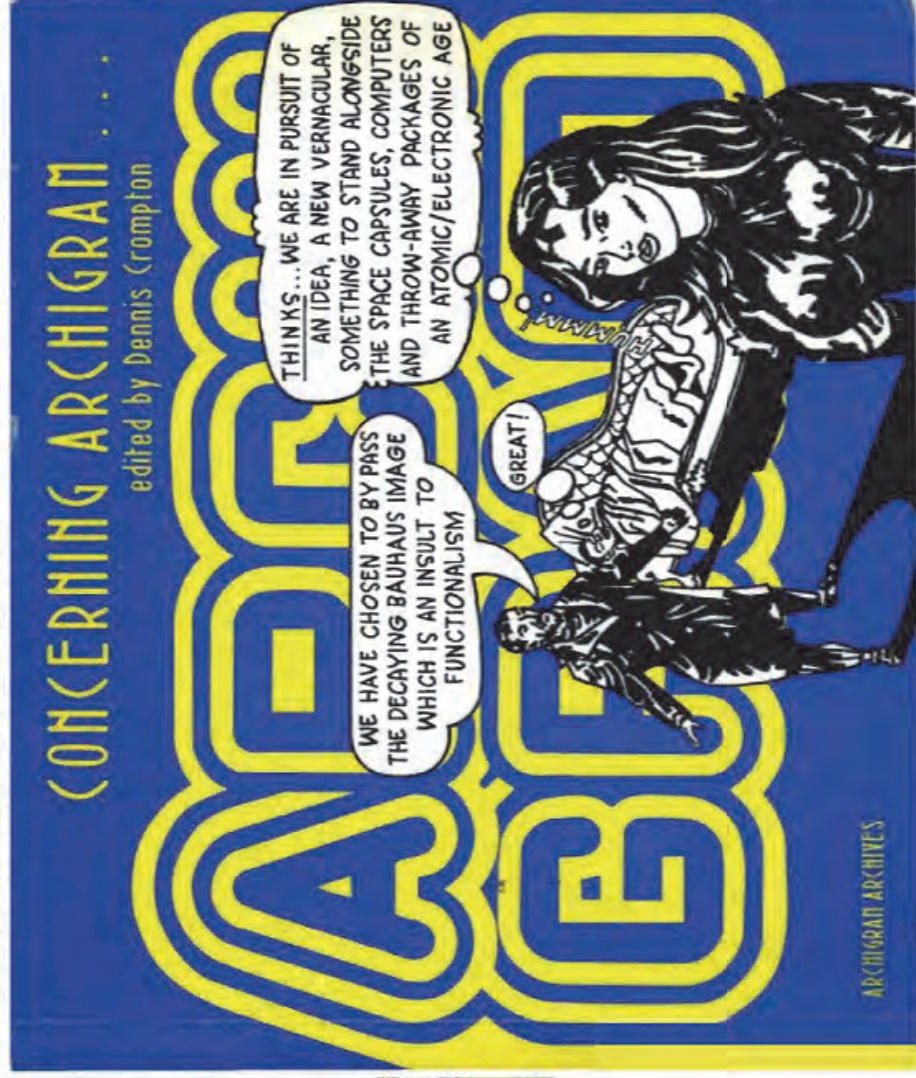




A DEMAND TO BE GOOD



From Monument to Instrument, architecture before and after originally presented to the Central Section AIA Alaska in April of 2013

Transferring to architecture school because it looked like fun, I still knew my life had to be about making the world a better place. Buckminster Fuller seemed to have that figured out and what I called the "Fullerian Imperative" always nagged at me. Like most in those days, I was more drawn to Archigram and their ilk, playing at art, design and fun.

Now, I would like to help my profession find some more productive, and rewarding, alternatives.

WHAT MATTERS WHEN YOU CHOOSE LODGING?



About 20 years ago, I took my son to see the sights in Washington, DC. Stayed at what appeared to be a nice hotel in a nice location, pretty good architecture. But the hot water was unpredictable at best. It occurred to me, somewhat sadly, that the quality of the shower was much more important than any "design" features. I don't have a problem with FLW's leaks. He wasn't building a Ford. **But unless there is a good reason to take a chance, one the Owner understands, we ought to at least get the practicalities right.**

FATA MORGANA



Photo of Foraker, Denti and Fata Morgana from Anchorage by Lauren Parker

10 years ago a joint venturing Seattle firm asked me to provide Alaskan ideas that could inform our project. Among others, I mentioned fata morgana, a mirage we see regularly. During the schematic design presentation, the architect seemed most pleased with the way the solution was infused with fata morgana. Of the 20 people in the room, architects, engineers and executives, few if any knew what it was, let alone what it had to do with the project. But, nobody asked. They either trusted the architect or knew they had no choice.

Our clients want us to bring joy but they'll have more faith in us if it's also clear that our work responds to their needs.

Blame it on Arlo Guthrie

Many years ago I heard Arlo Guthrie on the radio, maybe with Terry Gross, and he said something like this:

"I used to work so hard to make sure what ever I said was absolutely true. That meant, since as a result I was sure I was right, that I was not willing to listen to conflicting or competing opinions. Nowadays, I put things out there and ask everyone to work on them. Its more fun for me and it probably leads to better answers."

What a liberating idea!

As a profession, we've lost our way. A quick and quirky history will show how we got here. After that, ideas about how to restore the majesty of architecture, clarify our purposes in life, and strengthen our connections with our clients.

Ideas that can help architects find more productive, and rewarding, alternatives.



apologia

Maya Lin from Ohio U. Press



Eileen Gray from Metropolis



Denise Scott Brown by Robert Venturi



Julia Morgan



Zaha Hadid by Steve Double



Before I start the history, apologies to women and the rest of the world. Mine is an admittedly Euro-Phallo-centric version. At the very least, I wish I knew the histories of China, Japan and India.

I hope Denise Scott Brown receives the Pritzker Prize or the AIA Gold Medal or both very soon.

IMHOTEP

CERTIFIED COMPETENCIES

- * how to cut stone
- * how to fit stone
- * where the sun shines
- * how to organize slaves



Our understanding of our history is skewed towards monuments from the beginning because we rarely discover ruins of less important buildings. For our purposes here, Egypt and Imhotep represent those who first began to mark the earth as a human domain. Architects continue to see that as one of their tasks.

Seems a bit superfluous at this point, no?

KALLIKRATES + IKTINOS

CERTIFIED COMPETENCIES

- * carving and sculpting stone
- * post and beam construction
- * exquisite understanding of how things appear
- * how to organize slaves



this is actually Pericles, good pictures of the architects having mostly vanished

Among the many things we learned from the Greeks:

Expect your client to claim it was all his idea. Pericles is often cited as the builder of the Parthenon.

Many subtle strategies for achieving the appearance of weight and repose after changing walls to columns and beams.

Wouldn't it be great to be hired to ensure no untoward perspectival distortion?



ABBOT SUGER

CERTIFIED COMPETENCIES

- * pushing the engineers (stone masons) to their limits in pursuit of an architecture that makes people believe
- * raising money
- * how to organize serfs



Before the Romans, all was trabeated. In Rome, arcuation became ascendant.

Gothic cathedrals are the culmination of the arcuated tradition, at least until Buckminster Fuller.

Sadly today, in our practices, arches are used mostly for selling hamburgers.

THE DIVIDE



Until the Renaissance, builders and architects were not members of the contemplative class. They (no disrespect intended) just built! But, as contemplation spread out from the monasteries and academies, it fostered cultural self-awareness and, inevitably, insecurity.

Said the Medici's,

"We are not good enough. We must build like the Greeks and the Romans!"

MICHELANGELO



Michelangelo represents the beginning of architect as window dresser and creator of fashion. From the Renaissance at least until 1900, architecture remained mired in costume making. If you remember what the Egyptians were doing, well, from Michelangelo until 1900 architecture was just a riff on proving that here lived some Greeks or Romans, a salve for the cultural insecurity of the "Europeans".

In this system, like women's dresses at a ball, no two monuments can ever be the same. Novelty, more than anything else, rules.

A BRAVE FEW RETURN TO DING AN SICH



Boulee 1784



Dudok 1931



Sullivan 1908

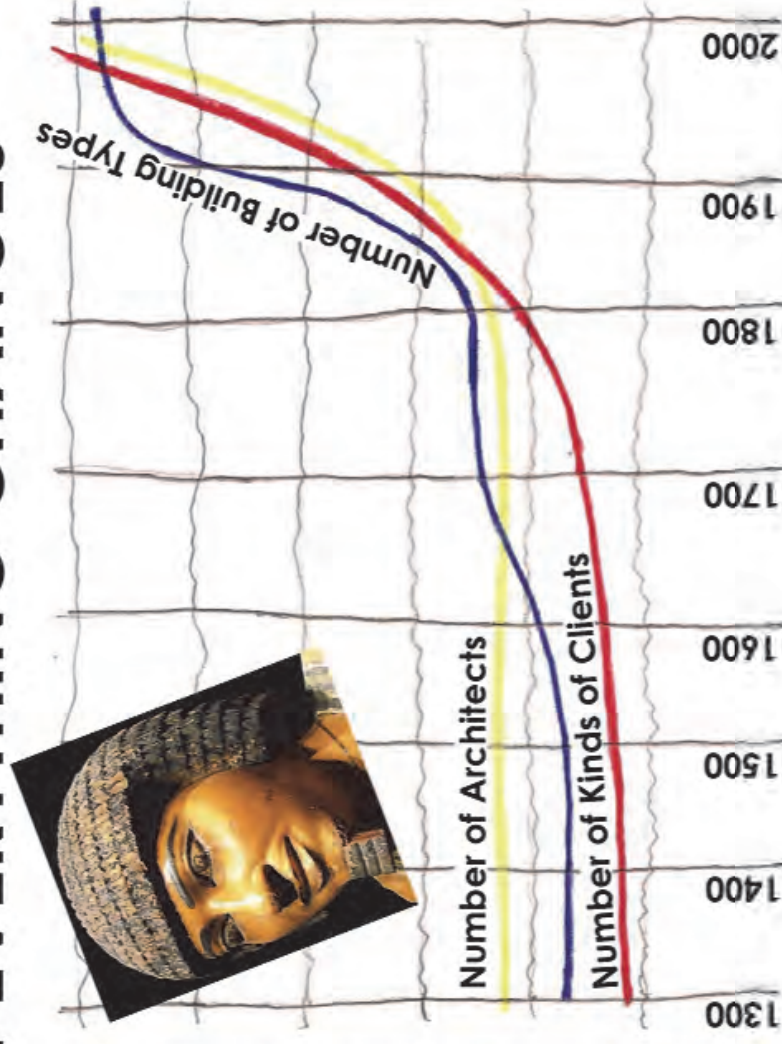
Michelangelo, a creator of nearly unmatched skills, was, nevertheless, a neo-greco-romanist stylist. Ding an Sich, the thing itself. A few voices began to challenge the hegemony of cultural wannabeism.

These challenges had at least two inherent advantages:

1. these projects marked the world with their own signature, and
2. these projects began to be informed by their own programs instead of needing to be like something else.

In the 1950's and 60's, Eero Saarinen was similarly working to escape the limitations of modernist stylistic hegemony.

MEANWHILE ALMOST EVERYTHING CHANGES



Our work still inescapably marks our presence and we must continually strive to reflect the best aspects of our cultures.

BUT

The number of architects and clients, types of clients and building programs has exploded.

The percentage of work that is monumental is shriveling.

Nonetheless, our education continues to focus primarily on the issues prevalent when monumentality was our most important mission. **Monumentality is no longer the central purpose of the vast majority of architectural commissions.**

More than 100 architects in a place as small and remote as Anchorage Alaska.

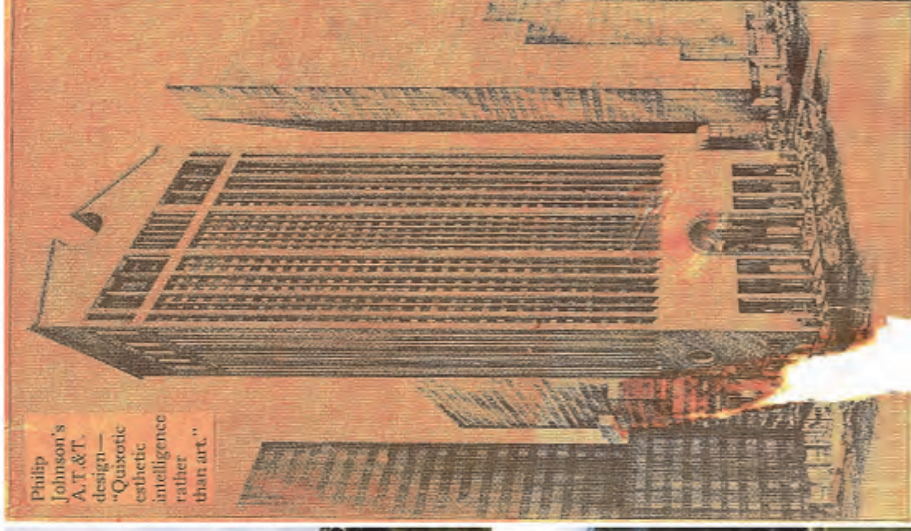
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THE ACADEMY STEALS THE BATON



Philip Johnson's A.T.&T. design — "Quixotic esthetic intelligence rather than art."



1

The Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture

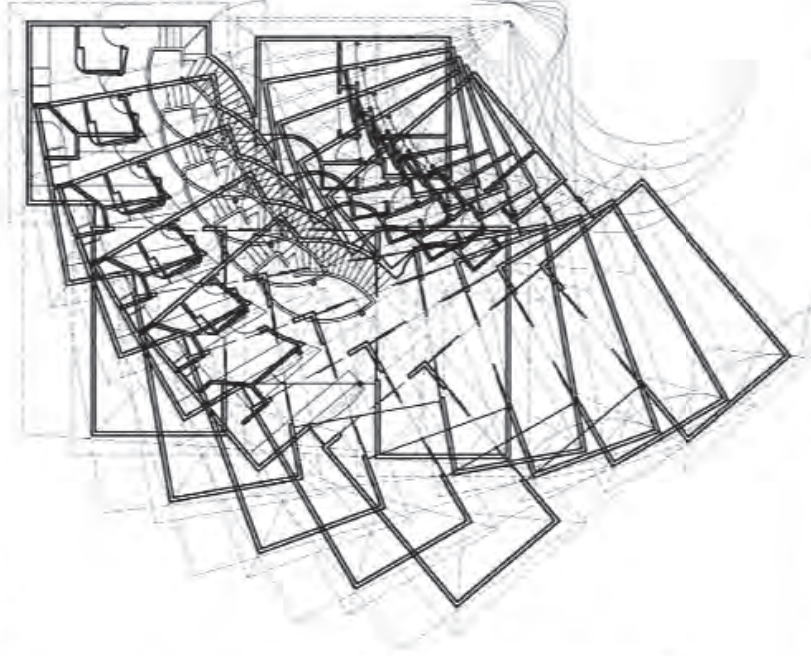
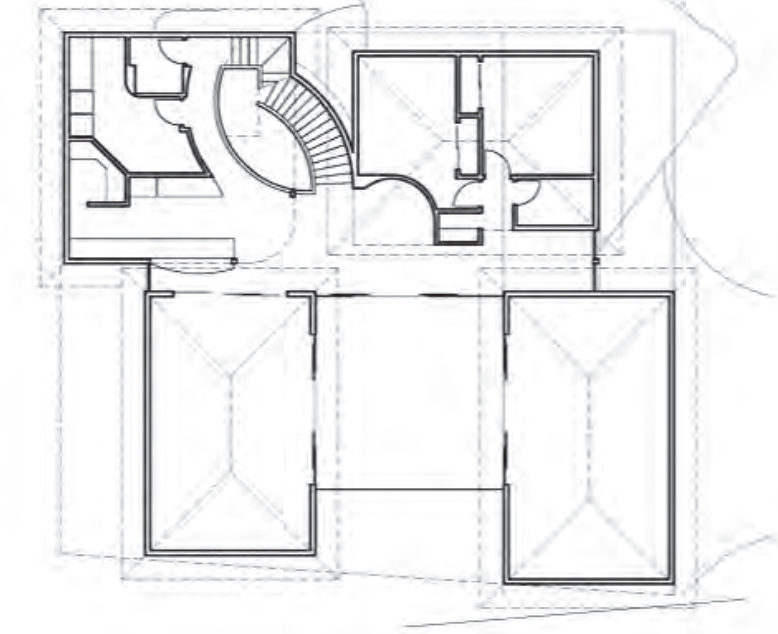
Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York in association with
The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in The Fine Arts, Chicago

Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture

Robert Venturi

Today the schools of architecture are ascendant, forwarding an increasingly irrelevant version of architect. Le Corbusier wanted to make machines for living. He meant it DING AN SICH, but the thinkers hijacked his ideas and created an art theory. Venturi tried to show us how to see clearly again, but instead was accused of having spawned the silly neo-neoist style of window dressing practiced by Philip Johnson and others known as post-modernism.

EMPTINESS: DECONSTRUCTIVISM



I remember feeling lost. History class showed us a multitude of wonderful pieces of architecture. Around us, we saw modernism producing ponderously dreary office buildings and retail facilities. I think it's fair to say that it was a crisis and still is. We knew we didn't want to fake history but we also didn't want to build any Pruitt Igoes. What to do? Some of us, fiddling with our new computers, occasionally found the sorcerer's apprentice taking over. Aha! Erase a few lines et voila, a new style based on French literary theory.

Architecture as novelty and monument has run its course. It's time to go back to ding an sich.

ANOTHER HIJACKING



Gehry, too, felt the emptiness. He found his way out by discovering that he could do truly new buildings by exploiting emerging technologies. Gehry is a soulmate of Abbot Sugar, an architect doing the best he can with the tools available.

Frank Gehry is not a stylist! He is not cool, if you know what I mean.

He is, rather, an architect bravely practicing at the dangerous beginning of a new technological tradition.

FROM MONUMENT TO INSTRUMENT



Monumentality has long ceased being our most important contribution. Architects will always inevitably write the palpable history of our culture. As important now, though, is the role our work plays in the day to day lives of our clients and communities.

If we make environments and buildings that support human life and the specific goals of each project, and if we emphasize that as our primary goal, without downgrading in the least our aesthetic concerns, we will become much more important, and valued.

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RESTORING THE IMPORTANCE OF ARCHITECTS

LEED 2009 Form Matrix

Updated January 2013



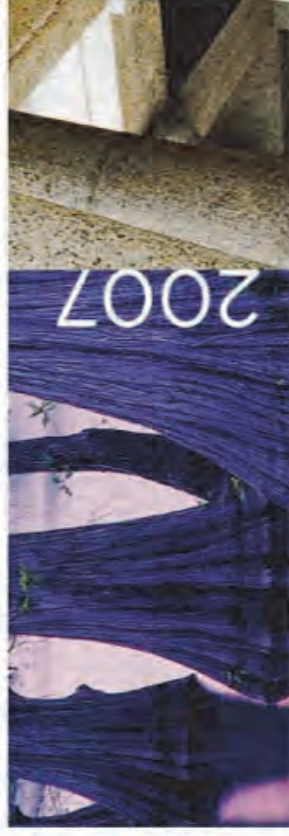
Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance
Pre-certification, Schools, Healthcare, Comm

... GROWING BEYOND
green

D/C	Rating System	Credit Cat.	Credit Number	Credit Name	Points	Exemplary Performance	Required Signatories		
							v03	v04	v05
Sustainable Sites									
Water Efficiency									
Energy and Atmosphere									
Materials and Resources									
Indoor Environmental Quality									
Innovation in Design / Innovation in Operations									
Project Information									

Arguably, the biggest change in architectural practice in my lifetime has been the rise of environmental concerns. LEED and USGBC have inserted themselves as the agencies of record. Above is the summary matrix for all current LEED analyses. Note that architecture is not mentioned. The only way architectural values can sneak in is through "Innovation in Design".

Do you recognize our old need for novelty? The engineers have made architects and architecture irrelevant at the sustainability table. Architects are only present to support and facilitate the work of the engineers. Not **There is no sustainability if the people and the built environment do not complement each other. It is time for architects to take back the mantle of built environmental sustainability based on our expertise about how people and buildings interact. We need to return the engineers to their rightful roles as supporters of this, the main mission.**



convention

Integrated Project Delivery: What, Why, and How

Session ID

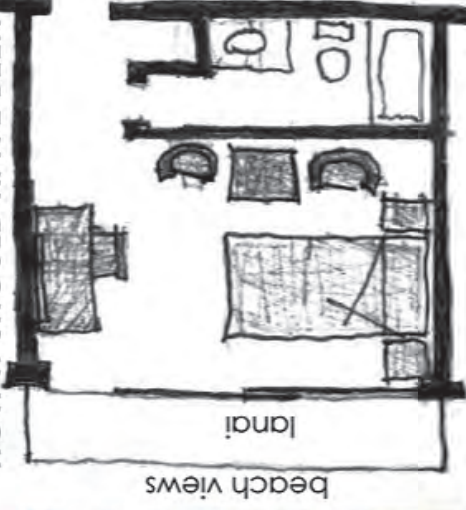
Wednesday, May 2, 11:30 AM

AIA leadership has long agreed that we have a problem. Their current solution is IPD featured above. The problem with IPD is that the architect comes to the table wanting to be the leader, but the architect also comes to the table as the only one who has only coordination to contribute. **We are the experts at how people and architecture interact. That is why we should lead the team and that is what our schools need to teach.**

BUILDING A NEW CANON



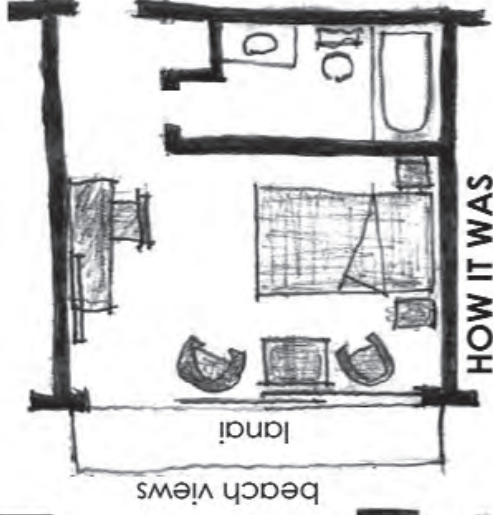
HOW IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN



beach views

landi

HOW IT WAS



beach views

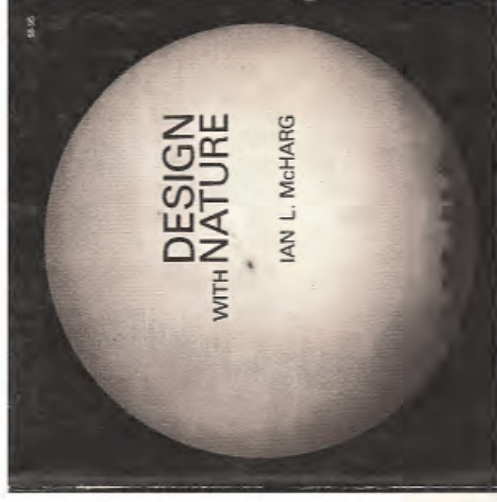
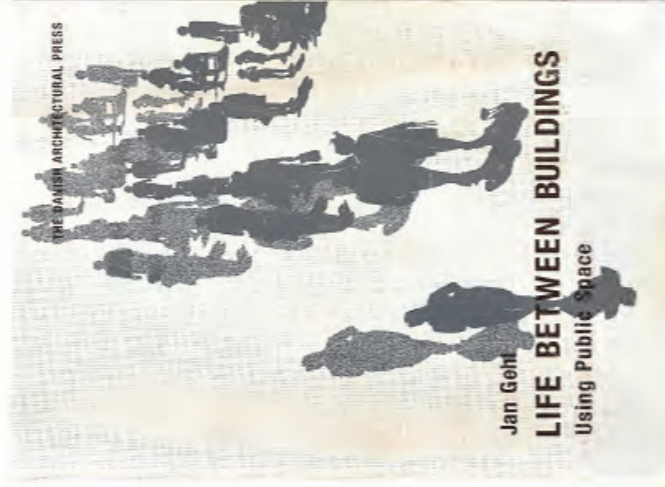
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Here the chairs look toward the view and they don't obscure the view from the bed. No difference in cost, much difference in enjoyment. **Architects need to recognize the difference.**

At the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) by VSBA, the main entrance is always locked. There were two main entrances at the beginning and the museum decided they could not afford to monitor both entrances. Now, there is a new addition to SAM and it requires a guard at the existing VSBA entrance to direct people to the latest real entrance. For the same reasons as before the second entrance to the VSBA building will soon be locked. And both will have the sign that I, as an architect, maybe hate the most. "Please use other door."

This is a programming failure and/or a failure to understand how the facility is going to operate. It's not the Owner's fault. We are the experts. Don't the Owners have the right to expect that from us? **We need to teach our students the "facts of architecture" and how to ferret out the client's and community's needs.**

SHOWING THE WAY



Louis Kahn and Ian McHarg swam in the same sea. Both, one poetically and one systematically knew that a project would tell them what it wanted to be if they listened with enough care. Theirs is the kind of programming we need. Christopher Alexander took the trouble to learn how people and buildings interact and then committed the sin of telling others.

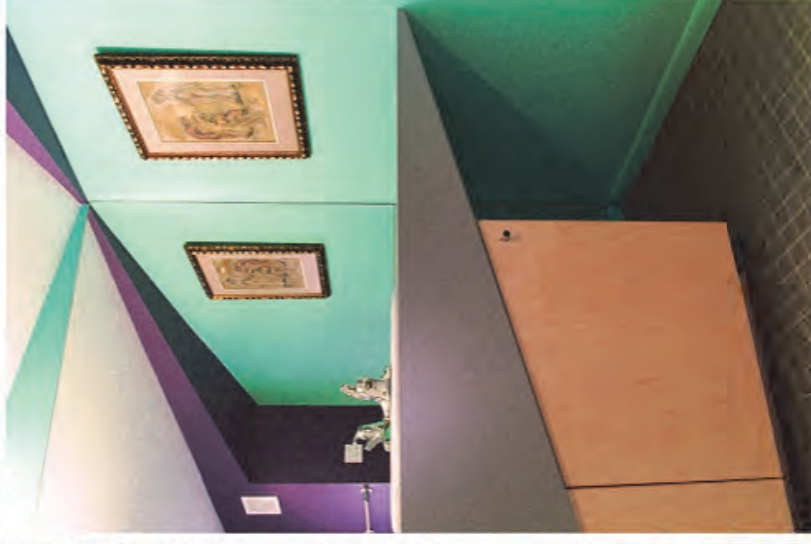
Jan Gehl has performed a similar service about how we use our cities.

Never fear. Complete a McHargian analysis, be enlightened by all that Alexander can teach, and you will still be faced with an infinitude of choices, a grand buffet of creative opportunities.

LEGITIMATE INDIVIDUATION



photo by Rebecca Lerner
 King of the South designed by Amy and Ted Weil



In advocating for the transition from monument to instrument, I often hear that I am in danger of fostering the development of a paint by number architectural culture. Nothing could be further from the truth. Artful moves and creative solutions must always remain at the heart of the architectural profession. Besides taking care of the practicalities, we need to enrich our world. I do that through legitimate individuation, discovering some aspect of the local and/or temporal essence, at whatever scale, and using it to increase the specificity of the environment.

EVERYTHING FOR A REASON, ARTFULLY DONE

for more about this and other subjects go to www.1dogooder.info