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What is it about architects and money? Was there ever a profession so confused, so anguished, by the often precarious balance of compensation, personal values, and self-worth? Was there ever a group (outside politics) that talked so much about an issue with so few results?

In fact, we talk about it so much that we've perfected our own version of Name-That-Tune: we need only a few words to recognize any ostensible reason, argument, or joke about the architect's plight. One of the most familiar, comfortable excuses blames our gentlemen-architect forebears, whose personal freedom from financial worries, disdain for the commercial, and notions of noblesse oblige have afflicted their progeny with something akin to a genetic inability to promote the value of their own work. "Don't people understand," architects often wail, "that architects are providing a service to society?"

Well, no. People don't understand. They understand that architects work for rich homeowners and richer developers. The last architectural media darling, Philip Johnson, even managed an adroit combination: a rich homeowner-architect who works for developers. Weirdly, celebrity architects seem to welcome public disaffection as they pursue their personal branding: the current darling, Frank Gehry, has perfected a persona of glum grumpiness. Fast on his heels for the title are Rem Koolhaas and Jean Nouvel, the Nosferatu look-alikes whose sinister scowls suggest that canny investors should consider garlic futures. It's all enough to make Michael Graves seem warm and fuzzy, with his goofy grin and his happily chirping teapots designed for the Target masses.

At the same time, people understand that doctors and lawyers, also descendants of 19th-century aristocratic proto-professionals, do provide a service to society. They know this because they watch television. Doctors may live in the biggest houses in every small town in America, but the image of the good-hearted country doctor has been one of the great stalwarts of television, inspiring Drs. Kildare, Welby, Quinn, Quincy, Hansen, and Greene. Lawyers may have to call Johnnie Cochrane one of their own, but television executives recognize the lawyer as that great American character, the defender of the underdog, inspiring Perry Mason, Matlock, Ed-the-bowling-alley-lawyer, and various dedicated big-city district attorneys administering law and order.

The irony is the role of irony in all this. Architects, masters of style because of their relatively limited means but boundless appreciation for good quality, are increasingly associated with purveyors of luxe (think "Rem/Prada"). And, more disturbing, architects themselves have begun to refer to "architecture" ironically, with unspoken quote marks around the term, a wink-wink-nod-nod concession that good design is increasingly a superfluous luxury.

The architecture profession also has its defenders of the underdog; with the recent death of Sam Mockbee FAIA, we have lost one of the greatest. But others remain: Michael Pyatok FAIA, John Wilson FAIA, small firms like The Narrow Gate, and countless others. Today's materialistic culture might have a different definition of "having it all," but it's hard to argue with architects who believe that a life based in creativity and public service is a life well spent.

Elizabeth S. Padjen FAIA
Editor
Regarding the review by the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) of our firm's World Trade Center West project, which was used to illustrate "Civic Civility: The Boston Civic Design Commission's First Ten Years" [2001-Year in Review], I would like to address some potential misconceptions relating to the actions of the architect, client, and review agency which may be inferred from the comments attributed to me in the article.

At our initial appearance before BCDC, our firm presented its first schematic revision to our competition-winning scheme, a building featuring a substantial cornice. Since this element, as we came to learn, would have required a building code variance, we as architects explored a number of alternative designs that would have avoided the necessity of additional code review, with its potential of extending the project schedule. One of these design alternates was the elimination of the cornice on the three sides of the building which engaged the public thoroughfares, the condition requiring the code variance.

Upon documenting this scheme, completed just before our presentation to the BCDC, it became clear to both our client, Pembroke Real Estate, and us that our revised design satisfied no one, and that something critical had been lost. It was not possible to modify the drawings prior to the scheduled presentation. By the time we met again with the subcommittee of the BCDC, the building elevations had been completely revised and the competition cornice had been restored. At a subsequent presentation to the BCDC of the final design, the subcommittee recommended approval.

I regret that the compressed snapshot of the process described in your article might suggest that our client was a reluctant proponent of the cornice, or acted only in reaction to comments by the BCDC. This was not the case; it was our client who directed us to seek the required code variance and increased the original project budget to achieve a final design which would meet the urban responsibilities of building on this important site. The project remains for our firm a model of client support and involvement and of thoughtful civic review.

Theodore Szostkowski AIA, Principal
Kallmann McKinnell & Wood Architects, Inc.
Boston

I was intrigued by "Past Masters" in the Spring 2002 "Preservation" issue, in which Paul Byard and Henry Moss discuss the polarization between architects who design new buildings and preservationists. The most effective way to bridge this polarity is education.

Byard describes Columbia University's experimental Chandigarh Studio, a joint design studio for architecture students and preservation students in which new additions were planned for Le Corbusier's buildings at Chandigarh. The studio was highly successful in getting both groups to grasp the essence of Le Corbusier's designs and the ways in which new buildings can strengthen and support old structures. Blending the two disciplines is essential if we are to find intelligent, meaningful ways to work with historic architecture.

If we don't understand old buildings — not only their forms and design vocabularies, but also their socioeconomic and political contexts — we won't know what is important to preserve, or why.

I would argue that much of the slavish historicism excoriated in the "Preservation issue is caused by a lack of knowledge. It is easier to simply replicate materials and details without truly understanding old buildings. When an architect takes the time to understand the meaning of a historic structure, why it was built and why it looks the way it does — it is much simpler for her or him to grasp what aspects are crucial to preserve, or to replicate in a sympathetic addition, and which aspects might be less important. That knowledge can also give the architect the freedom to depart, when appropriate, from the design vocabulary of the historic building.

Whether we work on old buildings or new, we always work within a cultural context. The critical that we learn our history: architecture, social, and cultural. Preservationists can translate that knowledge into the architectural process, as proven by Byard's studio.

Marguerite Carnell Rodney
Schoenhart Architecture + Interior Design
Simsbury, Connecticut
special issue devoted to historic preservation [Spring 2002] is inspiring, informative, and provocative. However, it touches on one of the most important, but prosaic, needs of preserving our cultural and architectural heritage. That is taking care of what we already have. Or, as any Morris wrote more than a century ago, we must do to “stave off decay with daily care.”

This year, I went to a reception in Boston City Hall’s entrance space. Two giant floodlights on a pole shined the gathering. Everywhere you looked there was a gleam of preservation. None of the original light fixtures needed and installed to illuminate the space worked. None of the modern lights cast a glare or shadow. None of the original light fixtures were replaced. "McMansions," the "Moderns" are particularly vulnerable. I fear that society today, with respect to Modern buildings, is not as fortunate as it was in the 1960s and '70s when it came to appreciation for Modern buildings. Unless we act quickly to expand appreciation for Modern buildings — to do some fast "taste making" — to enhance the prestige factor of owning a Modern house — we stand to lose much of our Modern architecture, just as we lost so much of our Victorian.

Architects and preservationists alike need to act quickly to assure the preservation of these and other Modern houses across the country. Historic and architectural surveys need to be updated to include buildings from the Modern era. Historic district zoning or landmark designation should be contemplated and instituted where appropriate. Educational and technical support are necessary programs to help owners to be good stewards of those treasures.

In 2002, can we all resolve to stop conferring god status on Philip Johnson ["Covering the Issues" Fall 2001]? He was responsible for two truly hideous buildings in this city: the Boston Public Library addition and the Palladian-windowed International Place. His AT&T building in New York was a cynical joke on architecture.

The fact that he launched the careers of a number of prominent architects should not obscure the fact that much of his work is a blight on the landscape and that, in temperament, he represents an image of the architect that many of us work hard to overcome.

Daniel Perruzzi AIA
Boston

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Editor's note:

In 1985, Michael P. Buckley FAIA, now the director of the Columbia University MSc in Real Estate Development Program, wrote an article for the Journal of Real Estate Development that, as the editor noted, provided "a glimpse into the architect's world [suggesting] certain ways in which developers can improve their understanding of — and influence over — the design process."

Buckley presented five principles for enhanced collaboration, which included: "architectural excellence — the developer's special responsibility"; "recognize the architect's currency"; "establish responsive site context and performance-oriented design goals"; "understand the limits of the representational process"; and "creatively negotiate the major stages of the design process."

But his second principle, "recognize the architect's currency," was perhaps the most provocative. By examining the ways architects are compensated, Buckley presented motivations that suggest values and influences at odds with the business world.

Reprinted here is what might now be dubbed Buckley's Second Principle. ArchitectureBoston invited nine architects to respond to his observations.
The architect's ego is further reinforced by the notion of simultaneous achievement. This notion is close to the Renaissance ideal of Virtue — the notion of mastery in diverse skills. One was expected to be a diplomat, a warrior, a poet, and an artist, all at the same time. Today, one can find an architect designing buildings as well as stainless-steel flatware, furniture, and custom fabric wall hangings. Not only accepted, it is, rather, expected. With a few exceptions, the significant cult designers do more than simply design buildings.

Finally, the architect's ego is protected by well-developed manipulation skills. Through incantations of a particular design philosophy, highly stylized three-dimensional models, and extraordinarily evocative visual depictions of various designs, the cult designer has acquired, by the time of his or her ascendancy, an excellent manipulative vocabulary to further his or her design intentions.

Architectural Recognition

Every eminent candidate for the status of cult figure has already developed several levels of recognition:

**Private:** Peer group knowledge of the designer's skills and acceptance of his or her level of virtuosity by others equally skilled.

**Professional:** Recognition on the speaking and university teaching circuit — along with some professionally sponsored recognition (such as Fellowship in the American Institute of Architects or National Academy of Arts) — and speaker slots at professional conferences (such as the American Institute of Architects, NACORE, ULI, ICSC, NAHB, or National Mortgage Bankers).
Product reinforcement is currency of another kind. Simply stated: a highly skilled designer needs to see visible evidence of his or her skills. The most obvious is the built product, a finished building in its environment. However, cult designers have existed with very little built product but, instead, extensive publication of their design. This form of design, known as “paper architecture,” has an extremely valid position in the hierarchy of currencies acceptable to designers.

Lifestyle, too, is gladly accepted. A recognized designer values a lifestyle which will afford architecturally related travel, since journeys to foreign countries (both accessible and remote) to visit architectural shrines play a big part in his or her experience. Good designers will also have developed a consciousness of trends in the arts — especially visual arts. They will exhibit eclectic connections to contemporary societal trends, both cultural and political. An emerging cult-status designer exhibits and values social connectedness with cultural and political talent. This includes personal interchanges with competent intellects in other disciplines (rarely extending to collaboration, however) and a form of “base touching” and “concept/idea checking” that exists within such social connections.

Public: Placing of custom articles by the designer, or spreads of published work in journals such as *Progressive Architecture*, *Architectural Record*, and the *AIA Journal* or *Interiors Magazine* in the United States; Japanese magazines such as *A+U*; or a number of European magazines. There is also recognition in the popular press including, for the more elevated cult figures, reviews by recognized architectural critics in *The New York Times*, *Miami Herald*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*. For others, there is general news coverage in newspapers, of which *The New York Times* is pre-eminent. Finally, there is recognition in popular magazines. Examples include *Esquire*’s recent article on Architectonica and Philip Johnson’s coverage in *Time*.

The Cult Designer’s Currency

The cult designer is rewarded in ways that do not resemble the incentives for most business-oriented professionals. It could be argued that every skilled craftsman, with adequate opportunity, works to the same level of recognition and achievement. Yet there exists some evidence that architectural designers are somewhat unique in the type of currency they will accept.

Reputation is one kind of currency. Recognition by the architectural educational establishment is the first and most heralded evidence of an emerging reputation. Exposure through professional journals (especially foreign journals) is a close second. Finally, public recognition is the last and least important evidence to a designer of his or her emerging reputation.

Charles N. Tseckares FAIA is a principal of CBT/Childs Bertman Tseckares, Inc. in Boston.

At any cocktail party, when people hear there's an architect in their midst, it takes less than a minute for someone to say that he or she once considered becoming an architect. Where paths not traveled and fantasy jobs are concerned, our profession rivals the fabled Vermont bed-and-breakfast in popularity.

In both instances, the yearning expressed is for work that is more "hands on" than whatever it is that’s usually done from 9 to 5. It’s hard to say whether such realities as pro-bono (i.e., unpaid) work would burst any bubbles. This is, after all, the only profession so entwined with public service that it needs no equivalent of the Hippocratic Oath. But never mind that — the object of longing is valid: the proper balance of financial reward and professional satisfaction throughout one’s life.

This, in essence, is the “architect’s currency” that Michael Buckley is writing about. There’s no denying that the currency is unstable, as he indicates; there are more business failures among start-up architectural firms than in any other profession, a gamble on par with opening a restaurant. Consultants point to the operational inefficiency inherent in multi-category practice — the steep learning curve, the size of staff, the unavoidable overhead — and advise specialization for profit’s sake. Designing a variety of buildings, though, is one of the chief joys of architecture. It also suggests a different terminology might be more useful than the one that Buckley offers. “Architect’s capital” is an older concept, referring to a cumulative body of knowledge. It’s a newer concept well, expressing the means of diversification that keeps the profession afloat while other endeavors are sinking.

There’s a certain sophistication in that fact that we architects feel less anxiety over the conflict of self-worth and one’s salary potential. It’s a lot more comfortable to drive a VW and be happy than to drive a Mercedes and be perpetually distraught. In fact, I believe we could be excellent advisors to people in the other fields who are searching desperately to find happiness and contentment in their work lives.

Charles N. Tseckares FAIA
Buckley’s cynical portrayal of the “architect’s currency” is not an entirely inaccurate cartoon regarding a certain segment of American practice circa 1985. But consider what one could observe about the corresponding segment of “real estate professionals” during the same period. Does anyone remember “The Donald?” Maybe that economic cycle thrived on cultivating a nasty stand-off between two groups of unrepentant (and now largely irrelevant) egomaniacs.

Our world has changed so much since then, and so has the landscape of business and practice. Globalization has all but eradicated the vestiges of complacency in the design professions (as well as in business), eviscerating firms and individuals alike who cling to versions of Buckley’s formulations of smugness. We now have a bigger problem: design and business intertwined culturally as a way to gain competitive advantage in the global marketplace. Architecture and business currencies have merged into “biz-design.” We are all liberated to despoil the earth together, creating vast wastelands of junk and spectacle at every conceivable scale. We are, finally, all on the same page, happy to speak glowingly and uncritically of efficiencies and profits. Architectural practices are now domesticated to feed on the lowest common denominators of success. Finally, “design professionals” are accepted as reasonable business people in a world gone mad.

But there are hopeful signs of a new earnestness: Design students who reject falseness and search for practical ways to create and rebuild communities, reclaim land ruined by previous generations, and conserve critical world resources. They know that life is the only real currency. Are practices and businesses ready for these young people? A revolution is likely.

Paul Wesley Nakazawa AIA

The myth of the architect living for the sake of art alone is counterproductive for both the architectural profession and those who benefit from its services. This myth is rooted in the misconception that the architect is a remote and independent figure, when in reality the architect is a central figure in the coordination of the complex building process.

The value of the architect in designing projects sometimes amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars in investment extends far beyond the creativity and strength of an overall vision. It derives from a thorough understanding and effective interpretation of the client’s programmatic, functional, and economic objectives in response to a particular market opportunity. This ability comes from the application of years of technical expertise and practical experience in putting together detailed, fully coordinated designs — designs for increasingly complex structures which must conform to extensive requirements for public safety, security, environmental and community concerns. It is the sum total of this combined expertise of art, technical, and managerial capability that encompasses the true value of the architect. It is difficult to attract those with the facility to achieve all of this to a profession that does not reward them. Furthermore, the reality of architecture is that it is an expensive service to provide.

Good architects and urban designers are critical to the future of the American landscape. Developers are their essential partners with the courage, perseverance, and financial acumen to realize these visions. Collaboration is the key, and with it, respect for the full value of both partners.

Howard F. Elkus FAIA, RIBA
Michael Yusem, Assoc. AIA
an architect and associate
with Machado and Silvetti
associates in Boston.

In Michael Buckley's world, architects are implicitly criticized for possessing the very abilities that constitute their professional expertise. This includes the ability to articulate spatial and formal ideas visually, and to think analytically and expansively about issues at play in the constructed landscape. Buckley harbors a suspicion that architects are deceitful manipulators of the image, who are somehow protected and insulated from reality. It's an old accusation, a rehashing of characterizations first made by Plato.

Architects, who work mainly through proxies such as drawings and models, could be included in Plato's "imitative tribe" of artists and poets. In Book X of The Republic, Plato considered whether the artist and poet legitimately have rights to be included within his ideal state. Inclusion in the Republic today might be akin to "having a seat at the table," the stock metaphor deployed to invoke the site of negotiation and decision-making in capitalist society, where, in less politically correct times, the "big boys" reputed to have sat. To rate a seat, knowledge of "reality" is a prerequisite; one must not be swayed by the power of the image or mistake its effect for that which "really" is true — that is, the power of profit. Pitted against the truth found in calculation and rationality (today's correspondent being the bottom line and financial sophistication), the poet/artist was found by Plato to be woefully insufficient in real-world knowledge, unlike the maker, who at least had knowledge of fabrication, or the user, who had the greatest authority to determine what was good or bad, through application and use. In Plato's world, the idea of a thing — its form — was divine in origin, which meant that the artist was merely reproducing a likeness of something uniquely authentic. In Buckley's world, absent divine generation, where would the form of the built environment come from? By disparaging architects' mastery of representation and its rhetoric, Buckley fails to understand that the speculative abilities and talents of architects have as much currency in creating value in the built environment as the speculative risks taken by developers.

Laura Miller is an assistant professor of architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and a member of the BSA board of directors.

Laura Miller
I don’t know where to begin to respond to Michael Buckley. He starts with the assertion that architects are poor at business — due in part to the lack of practical training during their architectural education — and ends with the premise that the “cult designer’s currency” is ego-stroking of various forms. One of his few statements with which I agree is: “The average architectural graduate has a threshold salary well below any other rigorously paid professional.” However, I disagree with the author’s explanation. I don’t think our society appreciates the time and effort it takes to produce a good design. I also believe that attitudes similar to Mr. Buckley’s help promulgate the misconception that architects don’t need or want appropriate monetary remuneration because of some intangible “designer’s currency.”

To the extent that there are other rewards or intangible “currency,” I do not agree with the list Mr. Buckley presents. For me, the primary reward, other than financial, is the satisfaction of shepherding a project from conception through codes, clients, budgets, and contractors to completion. Maybe it is an ego trip when clients or building occupants tell you, long after the project is occupied, how much they enjoy working/living/being in the space you designed. That is a satisfaction that is not self-serving, as Mr. Buckley suggests, but that comes from serving others.

Lynne Brooks AIA

Propaganda, to be swallowed, must contain some morsels of truth. Mr. Buckley’s portrayal of the architect was propaganda in 1985 and is even more virulent propaganda today.

His morsels are: design is at the core of what architects do; at large firms, entry-level architects get one-quarter to one-third of the salary that new lawyers do; as in the rest of society, some architects have large egos; as in most fields, architects have their own language that leaves the uninitiated cold. I recall the criticism in graduate school that a jury discussion occasionally reached a level so esoteric that “only bats could hear it.” The nature of human development seems to be that we talk the talk before we walk the walk.

Now, thanks to Mr. Buckley, whenever I meet a real estate developer, I’ll think that smile is somehow pitying.

Mr. Buckley’s propaganda masks a more sinister phenomenon for architects and developers — and the rest of our society — which is that we are now ruled solely by money and speed. Nothing seems to have lasting value. Things have value only until the next new thing appears. The built environment that used to be the support and context of our public life is now a coast-to-coast advertisement (or infomercial) for money — who has it, where to get it, how to spend it — connected by roads and parking.

The focus on money and speed has led real estate developers to regard the built environment as a commodity. The money-and-speed mentality changes the priorities for evaluating architects: the ability to get a design through the political and public approval process; the ability to design (and redesign) rapidly; the ability to heed and even anticipate client directives.

This situation will only get worse until each new project is an authentic exploration of how to make the world we’ve inherited a better place to live, work, and play together.

John Wilson FAIA
Michael Buckley's description of the values and pursuits of the cult architect feels not only dated, but also foreign and strange. His list of the architect's hoped-for accomplishments, if it is to be believed, paints a portrait of a soulless profession. He also implies that there are primarily two value systems in the world of real estate development: the financial motivations of developers and the ego motivations of architects. I'd like to suggest that there is a third system.

For the past 15 years, I have practiced another kind of architecture through The Narrow Gate, a firm that provides services to developers of affordable housing, supportive housing, and other community-based projects. Our clients are non-profit organizations working in greater Boston's neighborhoods. Together with my partners Bob Wegener and Neal Mongold, we have found satisfaction in specializing in a field that others may consider not "worth" specializing in.

The currency of The Narrow Gate has always been rooted in using architectural skills in a spiritually meaningful way. Our rewards can be found in working in long-standing relationships with caring and committed clients to serve people who are frequently on the fringes of a prosperous society. In the 15 years since we started The Narrow Gate, we have found a joyful and satisfying sense of purpose: a currency richer than we ever imagined.

It is also a great gift to work with partners who are friends and who share similar beliefs. The struggle is to balance work, family, and time off while keeping an eye on a sustainable livelihood for both our dedicated staff and ourselves. We've accomplished much in these years — we have even given financial issues their due attention! — but it is the currency of service to those in need that guides us.

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Today, nearly two-thirds of the nation's metropolitan population lives and works in suburbs.
Money, Cities, and Suburbanization
by Oliver Gillham AIA

In the last half-century, a vast change has been wrought in US urban patterns. In 1950, most metropolitan Americans lived and worked in dense, crowded cities like New York and Philadelphia. Today, nearly two-thirds of metropolitan America lives and works in spread-out suburbs that look like Los Angeles or Houston, and single-family detached housing (i.e., suburban housing) comprises more square feet of floor space in the nation than all other building types combined. At the dawn of the new century, America is building suburbs, not cities.

How did all this happen in merely 50 years? A significant part of the answer has to do with money and how money has been influenced by government policy. While it is fashionable to blame suburban sprawl on land-use regulations such as zoning, the truth is that the world might well look very much the way it does even if those regulations and policies did not exist. For example, it is well known that Houston, Texas, has no zoning. In theory, Houston could have made itself into Manhattan or Colonial Williamsburg, or even a medieval Italian hill town, but that's not the way it turned out. Even without zoning, Houston exhibits the sprawling suburban characteristics of many other US metropolitan areas.

To some degree, Houston makes up for its lack of zoning with other by-laws and ordinances as well as a host of special covenants and deed restrictions. But it is money — in the form of real estate markets, financing requirements, and infrastructure investments — that determined most of what has happened there, as in most of America's metropolitan areas. To demonstrate this point one need only look at just one of the ingredients of today's vast suburban world — the one that comprises the majority of America's built environment: housing.

Building Suburbia

Today, almost all Americans buy their homes using mortgages. Yet, before the 1930s there was essentially no such thing as a long-term self-amortizing residential mortgage in the United States. The financing that did exist only covered about 50 percent of the cost of a house. Furthermore, these loans were available for periods of only five to ten years, and no principal was paid off during that time. Only interest payments were made, with the entire loan principal plus any remaining interest due in a "balloon payment" at the end of the mortgage. As a result, by 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression, mortgage foreclosures had reached over a thousand per day, and the home financing system was in ruins.

Much was changed with the creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in 1934. The FHA did not directly build any houses or provide any financing. Instead, it insured long-term loans made by private-sector banks for home-buying and housing construction. The FHA also mandated an extension of the loan period for up to 30 years, reduced down payments to 10 percent, and required that the mortgages it guaranteed were fully self-amortizing. This meant that interest charges and a portion of the principal were paid off with each loan payment, eliminating the huge balloon payments at the end of the loan. Augmented at the end of World War II by the passage of the GI Bill, which established Veteran's Administration (VA) loans, the FHA popularized the home mortgage as we know it today.
The FHA also helped to create the suburban landscape as we know it today, through the "strings" that came along with the federal guarantee of the loans. From the start, the FHA's loan terms, rating systems, and underwriting criteria generally favored single-family homes in white, middle-class subdivisions, while discouraging apartment projects. During the 1950s, FHA-insured loans for single-family housing exceeded FHA-insured loans for multi-family housing by a ratio of seven to one. Published guidelines specifically cautioned against densely populated, older neighborhoods — in other words, most urban areas.

The FHA also set minimum standards for new housing construction that essentially ruled out non-suburban projects. These minimum requirements included lot size, setbacks, and the overall width of the house. In addition, FHA publications standardized subdivision design: wide streets with homes set far back on large lots were labeled as "Good," while traditional pedestrian-scaled neighborhoods were labeled as "Bad." The FHA went even further, expressing a preference for traditional styles, especially "New England colonial" architecture. Thus Colonial Revival architecture has been spread across the country from Maine to California and from Minnesota to Florida, regardless of any pre-existing regional styles. Today it can be hard to distinguish neighborhoods in Texas and Georgia from those in Connecticut or Massachusetts.

Of course, much has changed since the origins of the FHA. Among other things, anti-discrimination laws have taken effect, and new mortgages also cover condominiums in the city. But financing still comes with strings attached — for all building types. The banks and insurance companies that lend money for many suburban commercial and residential projects dictate size, uses, the number of parking spaces, mechanical systems, and even the materials to be used in construction. Lenders want to be sure they have a marketable commodity in case they end up owning the project, and "marketable" usually means something that has been successfully sold across the country.

Thus, in order to finance, build, and sell their real estate products, developers in places like Houston have had to follow many rules established elsewhere — just as if they had been built according to rigorous zoning standards. "Successful" models have become inculcated in the development process, making their own set of private building regulations.

Perpetuating Suburbia

Once suburbs are built, it takes a distinctive fiscal pattern to keep them growing. In most communities, residential development is almost always a municipal money loser. More public money is spent on education and other services needed to support residential neighborhoods than comes back from them in revenue. The situation is made more acute by the limitations on taxing power placed on municipalities by state legislatures and the electorate.

Because commercial development can help pay the school bill — normally the largest share of the local tax bill — it has become a sought-after prize in many communities. In the longer term, however, the same treasured commercial development can also lead to higher costs. Commercial projects create jobs. New jobs create a demand for new housing nearby, and new housing requires more subsidy from the community. This leads some communities to seek even more commercial investment to pay off the costs of all the new housing following the last round of commercial development. Some communities actually promise incentives like new roads or tax breaks, further eroding any gains they might have made.

When considered at the regional level, the problem is compounded as commercial building in one community can result in a residential explosion in a neighboring jurisdiction, with no offsetting tax gain. Commercial "growth" can itself be deceiving: in some cases, it may actually represent regional displacement as corporate headquarters and other businesses leave center-city locations for suburban sites in the same metropolitan area. The center city loses a source of tax revenue and employment, while the suburbs gain new infrastructure and education burdens.

Retail development in the form of malls can produce similar results. A community may literally give away the store for the tax revenues from a new regional mall. However, once built, a mall can cause downtown stores for miles around to close their doors, in some cases even putting older suburban malls out of business, and thus damaging the tax base of surrounding communities.
The Invisible Hand

Like Adam Smith’s “invisible hand,” the requirements of money and finance are among the most powerful forces creating the suburban world that American cities have become in the new century. The financing of housing and highways helped create the modern suburban metropolis, while temporary fiscal policies perpetuate it. Although signers have become sophisticated about the aesthetic aspects of the sprawl debate, the fundamental problems of suburbanization cannot be solved without addressing the underlying financial aspects.

Oliver Gillham AIA is an architect and planner based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is the author of The Limitless City: A Primer on the Urban Sprawl Debate (Island Press, 2002) from which this article is adapted. For more information, see: www.limitlesscity.com.

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In many cases, new suburban development does not represent regional growth but regional displacement, as investments in suburbs parallel disinvestments in cities.
Architects have a secure and significant place in the financial analysis of new buildings. Architecture does not.

Architectural services, by law or by necessity, are a requirement of contemporary financing formats. Bankers, lenders, underwriters, appraisers, and investors measure the risk associated with new construction projects by comparing the proposed projects with similar successful existing buildings. In order to predict the success of proposed projects, financial analysts and appraisers evaluate a variety of factors including: location; transportation access; local occupancy rates; operating costs; debt-service cover ratios; proposed rents versus market rents. These factors are incorporated in the “pro-forma” of proposed projects — the mathematical analysis that demonstrates financial viability. One of the factors considered is the conformity of the project’s design with comparable successful properties. Architecture, defined for the purposes of this discussion as the costs of design beyond basic utilitarian requirements, is rarely valued as a factor of contemporary pro-formas. The underwriting process discourages innovation; “different” architecture is considered an unmanageable risk to be avoided and can even result in the denial of a financing application. Only private or institutional owners who are so motivated can take the financial risk of sponsoring innovative architecture. When compounded by an “architecturally correct” regulatory design-review process, the lack of support by building owners for innovative architecture is understandable.

Why was architecture necessary in the pro-forma?

Historically, buildings were built first to solve utilitarian needs, but their architecture was often used for allegorical expression. The architecture was necessary to express social status, ecclesiastical spirituality, aristocratic authority, municipal prestige, or corporate power. Architecture may have been unnecessary for the program, but it was required for the allegory. Architecture transformed a shrine into a temple, a meeting hall into a cathedral, a house into a palace. Architecture was an inalienable component of the financial pro-forma of new buildings.

A medieval cathedral offers a good example of this relationship. It was more than a large public hall designed to keep the congregation out of the rain. The Bishop and Chapter, although constrained by limited financial resources, intended not just to build a major structure, but also to demand from their architect an aggressive new design that would surpass that of prior buildings. There were both religious and economic reasons for this demand, but architecture was critical to the purpose of the building. The additional cost of architecture was therefore an acceptable part of the pro-forma. The consistent demand from architecture patrons for new architectural expression historically stimulated the evolution of architecture and architectural styles.

When was architecture excluded from the pro-forma?

In the early 20th century, historic architectural styles such as Greco-Roman, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, and Neo-all-of-the-above were rejected by avant-garde architects. In Towards a New Architecture (1927), Le Corbusier stated that “styles no longer exist for us,” but, more significantly he also wrote, “…we no longer have the money to erect historical souvenirs.” As early as the 1920s, the financial underwriting of new buildings was already having difficulty paying for the expenses of architectural ornamentation. Although the International Style was promoting entirely different aesthetic and theoretical ideals, its relatively less ornate and less expensive construction attracted the cost-conscious real estate industry.
Why did many clients exclude architecture from the pro-forma?

After World War II, the recovery effort demanded construction overseas and new construction in the United States. National economies, however, were also recovering from the impacts of the war and could no longer finance the costs of prewar architectural styles. The academic acceptability of the International style and associated Modern Movement, as well as their affordability, facilitated the introduction of new aesthetic for postwar buildings.

This new aesthetic, free from classical architectural vocabulary, was responsive to financial reality. Although there were many notable exceptions, a generation of postwar buildings was built with little, if any, architecture by misapplying the fundamental principles of the International Style. These often unimaginative and monotonous buildings nevertheless performed well financially. During the second half of the 20th century, as a more diversified scope of program-related services was required from architects, their clients demanded less architecture.
Architecture was no longer a mandatory part of the pro-forma.

Why don't clients support innovative architecture?

Contemporary building owners want their new buildings to be well-crafted, efficient, and reliable. If their new buildings can be more attractive than their neighbors’ or competitors’ buildings, so much the better, as long as the design remains within the bounds of cultural correctness. Most speculative-building owners, as well as many municipal, institutional, and corporate clients, are not in business to promote or sponsor new advances in architectural design. Their buildings are intended to solve operational requirements, to operate institutions or businesses, or to make a profit. Innovative architecture rarely enhances the profitability of current projects. Building tenants and users are attracted to new buildings for many reasons beyond utilitarian purpose, including location, access, amenities, views, opulent décor, scale, and prestige. Tenants and users may demand some or all of these, but they rarely demand cutting-edge architecture.

Real estate developers are sensitive to market demands, and institutional owners are sensitive to the demands of their occupants. If either perceived a demand for innovative architecture that also improved marketability, profitability, or performance, they would provide it.

Why don't building users demand innovative architecture?

Few architects understand or acknowledge the disconnection between contemporary architectural design and popular taste. Just as the general public finds modern painting, new symphonic music, and contemporary sculpture completely incomprehensible, architectural consumers rarely appreciate contemporary architectural design. There is a great deal more popular affection and nostalgia for 19th-century buildings than there is for 20th-century buildings.

This is particularly obvious in the current design of single-family homes throughout the United States. Historically, large single-family homes were often the laboratory for new architecture. The owners of multi-million-dollar new houses today rarely demand avant-garde architecture. They routinely request comfortable and familiar historical architectural styles in regional vocabularies. The same trend became more evident in the design of commercial and institutional buildings in the past decades. This re-use of classical architectural vocabulary may have been a hesitant attempt to reconnect architectural designs with popular taste. If the 20th century began by looking toward a new architecture, it ended by looking toward an old architecture.

How can architecture re-enter the pro-forma?

In order to re-introduce the value of architecture in future financial pro-formas, architects will need to create a new 21st-century architecture so appealing to building users and owners that they will demand its inclusion in new buildings and agree to pay for its costs. This is an optimistic proposition, but failure to reconnect architecture with public taste and to re-establish a strong demand for architecture from building users will further discourage the re-introduction of architecture in future financial pro-formas.

The consequence may be that, for most architects, future architectural practice will consist of fundamentally technical professional services, and only a few elite practitioners will practice the Art of architecture.

Willy Scarsic AIA is senior vice president of Wingate Development Corp., which provides real estate development services within Continental Wingate Company (CWC) and its affiliates. CWC is a national company that is involved in real estate financial services and lending, housing, commercial office space, property management, and healthcare. He is also president of Wingate Real Estate Strategies; a CWC subsidiary that provides real estate development expertise and project management to companies not affiliated with Continental Wingate Company. Scarsic co-chairs the BSA Housing Committee.
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Given at the twilight of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address was supposed to be a rousing screed about an imminent Union victory, taunting the vanquished rebels and celebrating the North's military prowess. Instead, it was a sermon — soulful, contemplative, warning of the dangers of pride and malice. He alluded to slavery ("the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil") and to the price that might be exacted from a country that had allowed it to exist for so long ("every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword"). In this spirit of self-examination, Alabama architect Samuel Mockbee FAIA hit on the idea, a century and a quarter later, of harnessing the talent and enthusiasm of young architects to build housing and community facilities in one of the poorest counties in the Deep South. In so doing, he may have come close to living up to Lincoln's closing exhortation to "strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds."

Mockbee's death in December 2001 at age 57 cut short a life with so much work yet to be done.

I am a sixth-generation Alabamian, with deep roots in a region called the Black Belt, so named because of its dark, fertile topsoil. When I was growing up, my grandmother entertained us with tales of a childhood spent in large white houses with wide breezy porches, of ancestors' illustrious Civil War adventures, of steamboats that hauled baled-up cotton down the Chattahoochee River. Our elders conveniently ignored the untidier elements of our past — the fetid "negro quarters" of small towns, the intolerable hours and low pay of household help, the subtle threat of violence that shadowed blacks for much of the 20th century. We went along with this fairy-tale aristocracy, one never quite as grand — and certainly not as benevolent — as Mitchell and Selznick had presented it.
The Black Belt is also home to Hale County, where Mockbee brought the Auburn University students in his Rural Studio over the course of a decade. Hale County was one of the losers in the geographic and political sweepstakes of the 1950s and 1960s that decided where the interstate highways would go. Now, isolated, unappealing to industry, and no longer able to count on the past’s agrarian bounty, Hale gets by, just barely. Old landed families revel in memories, while those of African descent do as they have for two centuries — work hard, watch the world from their small porches, sing praises to a seemingly distant God.

As a design teacher, Mockbee emphasized the local and the spontaneous, the used and the useful. Has there ever been a more perfect indigenous material than the orange/red rammed-earth walls of the Mason’s Bend Community Center? Has there ever been a more effective evocation of the wide Southern front porch than in the Bryant Hay Bale House?

“If you seek his monument, look about you,” reads the epitaph for Christopher Wren. So it is with Mockbee. One senses that Mockbee would be uncomfortable with all of the adulation occasioned by his death, all of the eulogies from, as my grandmother would say, “fancy Yankees” — The New York Times, the American Institute of Architects, the architecture magazines, and now Princeton Architectural Press, whose new volume Rural Studio is at once a poignant memento mori and a celebration. For at its core, Mockbee’s Rural Studio was about one man’s love of a place, a green, flat place of dirt roads and patches of kudzu that look like giant bears, where it’s hot as hell in summer and rains most of the time, where there’s not much to do but work and talk and sit on your porch and ask, “How’s your momma doin’?” and really mean it.

In this place, as a result of Mockbee’s tutelage, the visually poetic eclipses the tragic. And still keeps that rain out.

James McCown is a freelance writer in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Bryant House, 1994
cost: $15,000
(plus donated labor and materials)

"The goal is not to have a warm, dry house, but to have a warm, dry house with a spirit to it."
Samuel Mockbee

Far left:
Shepard Bryant in the doorway of his smokehouse, designed and built by
graduate student Scott Stafford.

Left:
Bedrooms for the grandchildren are provided in three barrel-vaulted structures.

Below:
The porch runs the length of the main house, the walls of which are made of 80 lb. bales of hay wrapped in polyurethane and covered with stucco; smokehouse in foreground.
Center and bottom: The red-orange walls are made of rammed earth—a mixture of local clay, sand, and Portland cement.

Left: The main façade is made of 80 recycled Chevrolet Caprice windshields bought for $120.

Top: The building, an open-air pavilion, is used as both a community gathering place and as a chapel.

Mason’s Bend Community Center, 1994
cost: $20,000 (plus donated labor and materials)

"...a windshield chapel with mud walls that picks up on the community's vernacular forms and shapes."
Samuel Mockbee
Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency
Yancey Chapel, 1995

Cost: $15,000
(plus donated labor and materials)

"The best way to make real architecture is by letting a building evolve out of the culture and place."
Samuel Mockbee

Far left and center:
Walls are constructed with used automobile tires reinforced with re-bars, filled with soil, and then covered with stucco.

Left, bottom:
Candles provide additional light — and mystery — in the open-air structure.

Above:
Scavenged materials include floor slates quarried from a local creek by the students, heavy timbers from an abandoned building, and rusted roof shingles made of "...thrown-away tin from old barns and stuff."

Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency
Text by Andrea Oppenheimer Dean
Photos by Timothy Hursley
Princeton Architectural Press, 2002

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Money Talks: Learning the language of finance

by Scott Simpson FAIA

Many generations of architects have been nurture on the notion that form follows function. This is true enough, but it should also be noted that form follows finance. As much as steel, glass, and concrete, money has always been an essential ingredient in the making of architecture. Great public buildings, going back to the Roman Forum and Coliseum, were financed by public taxes. The cathedrals of Europe owe their existence to tithing by the faithful. Corporate profits produced such landmarks as the Citicorp tower in New York and the Transamerica tower in San Francisco. Wealthy private patrons have created many notable works of architecture, from the Kimbell Art Museum to Fallingwater. None of this would have been possible without money, and lots of it. Indeed, the design process must respond to many influences that transcend aesthetics, such as time, technology, and politics. At every step, there is the issue of finance — how to pay for it all.

It’s a curious irony that most architects shy away from this essential truth. They aren’t taught to understand or talk about money, much less use it as a design tool. Most are notably woeful cost estimators who can barely read a corporate balance sheet. Yet, money is the lingua franca of the client world. To do great design — to get the best results for the resources available — it’s important that clients and architects speak a common language. Not surprisingly, clients, who are fluent in the language of finance, would much rather deal with architects who can count than starry-eyed garret-dwellers who can barely balance a checkbook. Still, many architects studiously avoid the subject for fear that it might somehow taint the “purity” of the design process. This is a little like a chef who avoid all use of butter.

Indeed, fiduciary responsibility is an essential part of any architect’s job. Standard AIA contract documents require the architect to keep the owner informed of the probable cost of the project, to evaluate the impact of change orders, and to certify that payments to the contractor are correct. Architects must also make impartial decisions about the performance of both the owner and the contractor during construction. Failure to properly execute such responsibilities can have significant financial and legal consequences. Owing to such debacles as the savings-and-loan crisis and the collapse of Enron, we have been made painfully aware how important it is for professionals such as lawyers and accountants to maintain the highest professional
d ethical standards. The same holds true for architects, yet there are very few, if any, academic courses in financial management offered to design students. As society demands more accountability (in the literal sense), will architects be prepared to respond? Will they be able — and eager — to give their clients the advice that they need to make right decisions?

Architects are to overcome their chronic complaints that fees aren't high enough to cover costs or that additional services are rarely recognized and compensated properly, then they must be able to communicate the value of what they do in terms that owners can understand and appreciate. This means becoming fluent in the language of money. Indeed, architects need to learn that running a profitable firm is the best way — and in fact the only way — to create top-quality design. A firm which is not financially healthy will be too preoccupied to focus on its core mission of delivering the "goods" for its clients. It's time that we learned at good design and good business not only go together, but they are also inseparable. To do great design, it's necessary to hire the best staff, get the best equipment, and provide great workspace — and none of this is free.

Clients are real people, and they appreciate the value of a dollar. Good clients — the kind that every architect wants — know how to spend their money wisely (that's how they got rich enough to become clients in the first place). Good architects — the kind that every client wants — know how to produce the very best results given the resources at hand. Trouble starts if there's a disconnect between clients' aspirations and the depth of their pockets, or if the architect regards the budget merely as a suggestion rather than a parameter to be respected. While architects may bemoan a tight budget or a tight fee, the fact is that clients understand money very well indeed. Bottom line (so to speak), they're looking for value. Smart clients know what they want and they have the ability to pay for it — what they're looking for is help from the architect in translating their dreams into reality.

The good news is that design, by its nature, is very much a value-added proposition. New buildings can generate revenue in the form of rental income, and they can also generate real savings by using less energy. New space allows firms to expand their operations, adding to the bottom line. New ways of organizing people and work processes make it possible for clients to operate with substantially greater efficiency, enabling them to produce more with less. Even aesthetics — that most non-objective and ethereal of subjects — can be economically beneficial. Noteworthy design attracts more people, can generate more revenue or sales, and hence justifies higher rents. What architects need to do is to find the words to explain this value creation to their clients, for when they do, savvy clients will gladly pay the fees. Who wouldn't invest a dollar to get ten in return? By designing buildings that take clever advantage of the allowable zoning envelope; by devising floor plans that increase efficiency, occupancy, and interaction among staff; or by creating spaces that attract new people and new business, architects can add substantially to their clients' bottom lines.

The value inherent in good design is worth many times more than the cost of the fees involved. Indeed, buildings should be seen as profit centers, not cost centers. The problem is that most architects can't find the words to explain this to their clients. They need to be able to communicate clearly and convincingly that the lines of a drawing are intimately connected to the client's bottom line. They need to embrace rather than shy away from the financial and fiduciary responsibilities that go with the job. They need to understand financial statements, annual reports, and 10-K forms. In short, they need to be fluent in the language of money.

The dimensions of good design are many and subtle, and therefore often difficult to articulate. Unlike manufacturing, design is not always predictable — it's a process of exploration and creation. But this should not stop us from talking about real, measurable, quantifiable value. Architects are in a unique position to create value for their clients by creatively interweaving design, technology, time, politics, and economics. This has always been the case, but it is rarely explained. Form follows function, to be sure, but that is only part of the story. When architects find the words to explain the value proposition inherent in every single project, they will change how they are viewed by the client world. Even more importantly, they will change how they view themselves.

Scott Simpson FAIA is a principal of The Stubbins Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a member of the board of directors of the American Institute of Architects.
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Honor and Glory:
The profession and business of architecture

Victoria Beach AIA
talks with Jeffrey Stein AIA
STEIN You’ve spent the last few years teaching and thinking about professional ethics, which often comes down to the relationship between money and the practice of architecture. How is that relationship different now from what it was in the past?

BEACH Architecture and money have always been partners, but it used to be that only clients were expected to have money. Architects were the patronized artists or professionals serving them. The difference now is that architecture has become much more viable as a business, and there is money in being an architect.

STEIN Was there a particular moment in time when that change occurred?

BEACH I’d say that things started to change around the turn of the 20th century, with the professionalization of the discipline. Professionalization brought licensure — in effect, a monopoly privilege to practice, which opens up avenues for making money. It also opens up questions of professional ethics around the pursuit of money. I think it’s important for architects to remember that they do not have licensed monopoly privileges to practice because they’re in business. If business were their primary purpose, the government would not protect them. Architects are protected because the government expects that they will serve society in some way. An architect who treats the profession primarily like a business is not playing fair. I would even say it’s unethical.

That’s the social-contract point of view. Another way to look at it is from the point of view of the professionals themselves. One school in professional ethics today says that one of the wonderful things about being a professional is that it’s a rewarding station in life. It’s a view that goes back to Aristotle, who was a “virtue ethicist.” Virtue ethics means that the reason to be ethical is that it makes you a better person, and being a good person is a great thing to be in life. So you might say that if you want to have a virtuous and rewarding life, one way to do it is to be a professional. That’s unfortunately an endangered view of professional life.

STEIN I agree — it’s definitely an endangered view. But why do you think that’s happened?
BEACH The primary danger comes from commercial pressures to run a professional office exclusively like a business with little or no resources devoted to advocacy for the non-paying public or for good design itself. That's part of it. Another part is that architects are in the building industry, and we derive a lot of our practices from contractors. For example, we have contracts with our clients. That is different from other professionals such as lawyers, who have voluntary, advisory relationships with their clients.

During the development of architecture as a profession, a decision was made to lay out the expected project tasks in contractual terms. We were project-oriented to begin with, and we were expected to predict the services and work that would be necessary to complete a project to the client's satisfaction. Doctors, lawyers, and other professionals seem to have escaped the contractual relationship. It's not a mandatory part of their service as much as it is for us.

STEIN There seems to be much more discussion of ethical issues now than there once was. Are we more aware of the consequences of societal ethics, the consequences of what we do? Or are there simply many more consequences than there used to be?

BEACH You can look at that in terms of the duties we have by virtue of being professionals. Those duties are usually categorized by the beneficiaries, that is, whom or what they are duties to. The "who" would be the public, your client, and your colleagues. The "what" might be the knowledge base of the profession. Architects have always had to be on top of that; their duty has always been to be leaders in forwarding structural, technical, and legal advances, including issues such as accessibility. That duty has become much more complex, there's no question. You would have had to master other, maybe less complex, things in an earlier age, but that doesn't mean that the essential duty to be on top of these issues is any different. And that's a point that is recognized in the AIA code of ethics. You must be upfront about what you know and work to the level of your experience. But in the meantime, you must contribute to the body of knowledge.

STEIN So how does the business of architecture — the business of running a firm and meeting payroll and generating profits — support that duty? Can it? Or does it sometimes push duty aside?

BEACH It often does push duty aside. I wouldn't say that most practices are devoted to pushing the bounds of architectural knowledge. It's expensive to do that, and research-and-development is a category of expenditure in architecture firms that is very small, if it exists at all.

STEIN Architects don't imagine that there is a return on that investment dollar.

BEACH No. There's no immediate profit in it. The ultimate beneficiary is the field of architecture, your clients, the public, or your colleagues. But the fact that it's going to cost you money does not mean that it's not a duty.

STEIN How are other professions dealing with these issues?

BEACH The practice of medicine has certainly swung over to being a business — doctors can no longer always put their patients first. I think most doctors today feel divorced from the opportunity to heal through practicing medicine. Of course, practicing medicine is very different from producing a design for a home or office, but the problems of the medical profession could very well be visited on architects if we're not careful.

STEIN How do we avoid that?

BEACH By putting design first, putting duties to our clients first, putting service to our community first — before our own financial interests.

STEIN Are developers to architects as insurance companies are to doctors? If I go to a doctor and I have health insurance, I'm not really concerned about how much the doctor's fee is because some third party pays it for. And similarly if I need a place to live and rent an apartment, I'm not concerned about the architect's fee — a developer has already paid it.
BEACH I think it happens quite often. Architects who take that step are usually people who are professionally secure. But the dialogue within the profession on these issues is not very developed and certainly lags the discourse in other professions. Medical ethics is a long-standing, very well-regarded field, as is legal ethics. We have relatively little discussion of architectural ethics in the academy, which means that it can't trickle over into the profession.

And we haven't really focused on the most serious question at the root of architectural ethics, which is whether we are in fact engaged in a profession in the strictest definition. We may very well not be, which would mean that architecture is starting to resemble its earlier incarnation before the turn of the last century. Back then, it was an art that you came to by virtue of being a very insightful, masterful builder who took your work to a higher aesthetic level; you were a fine artist who was able to translate your work into the built medium. That doesn't suggest any of the duties that we expect of a professional. There are various theories about morality and art, but one could say that art should be devoid of ethical obligations — otherwise how would it be free to explore human experience? Human experience is not always goodness and beauty. I think that could be an explanation, and a very potent one, for why we shouldn't be talking about ethics at all, and why architects have been right to avoid the subject.

STEIN I'd also add that it's likely that architects themselves have changed since then, in terms of their backgrounds and their expectations of the field. In the mid-19th century, for example, only a certain sort of person from a particular segment of society was drawn to become an architect-artist and did so with an attitude that his art was going to serve culture. This person understood that art was a social act without having to be explicitly educated in it.
In the 20th century, architecture as a discipline became democratized and its training became more formalized. Now the practice of architecture draws people from many different walks of life, people who have many different reasons for becoming architects.

**BEACH** Yes, although I think training probably did occur in different, perhaps even more rigorous, ways before it was formalized within the academy. And that occurred with the recognition that architecture is an artistic pursuit in a medium that has enormous impact on people, because the medium is physically so large.

**STEIN** And it's getting larger all the time — not only in terms of the size of individual buildings, but also in terms of the size of what now constitutes the built environment. There are now six-and-a-half billion people on the planet. All of us requiring architecture.

**BEACH** Requiring shelter. I don't know if any of us require *architecture*. I think that's the problem. Providing shelter confers certain obligations, because you're intervening in people's lives. Providing art confers no obligations. And that is the component that differentiates architecture from medicine or law or engineering.

**STEIN** We say that architecture is a value-added profession.

**BEACH** You could say that's all it is. We take our cues from the building industry; we've learned how to run projects. But if you were being really strict about it, you could say the essential part of what we do, the thing that's most essential for humanity, doesn't need to be done by an architect.

**STEIN** At the same time, it seems that our definition of architecture is expanding. Architecture firms are providing services to clients that only a little while ago weren't thought of as architectural services at all — conferring with CEOs about their corporate vision, examining building performance, projecting life-cycle costs.

**BEACH** Those are all roles that were taken away from architects by project managers, construction managers, and other building professionals. We are now reclaiming them. Architects were in the same social circles as their clients — the people who were making decisions — and they gave that kind of advice all the time.

**STEIN** The reason for recovering those roles now is that simply adding value to what someone else does is not highly thought of in our culture and doesn't pay much.

**BEACH** Another reason is that the person who is closest to the client is the person who has the most control of the project, and control of the project may mean more money if that's what you want. Watching that control slip away and realizing that you are going to have to work with decisions made by other people is very frustrating and makes it nearly impossible to perform full professional services. You can't do right by the public or by the users if someone has already restricted your range of motion to the point where you have to do what has already been established.

**STEIN** We've talked about several different areas of professional practice in which things don't work very well, not only for architects but also for clients and for the general public. It sounds a bit bleak. How can we fix things?

**BEACH** I think that a lot rides on the young people in this profession.

**STEIN** How can young people initiate changes to the profession? Are there models for them to follow? How can they avoid treading the same path?

**BEACH** We have to look for models. Holland and Britain provide two examples. The Dutch government sponsors architecture firms — it actually gives them money. Somewhere along the line, Holland decided that one of its competitive advantages as a nation was its tradition of interesting architecture. The government made a strategic decision to become known for exporting architects and architecture. The British example is a
45

...different. There's a lottery for architecture in Britain and the proceeds go to increasing the fee on selected projects. If you're designing a bridge in Cornwall, for example, and your project is selected, you will get more than the standard fee, with the understanding that you will then create something interesting.

TEIN The issue is that good design costs money because it takes more time.

EACH Exactly. Holland has a more reliable government-instituted grants system, and Britain has selective lottery system. Either way, the point is to support architectural research that otherwise wouldn't be done within the confines of the economics of a typical firm. Both Holland and Britain have recognized that research in practice is architectural research. This is very important. One can do research by adding time to the design process and through investigation into the design process itself. In both of those countries, the focus is on emerging architecture and merging, young architects.

There are other reasons, though, that I think young people represent something promising, and that has to do with advances in what we teach them. One of the problems with the architecture profession is that everybody — Robert Gutman has already covered this point — working in an architecture firm tends to be an architect. Not everyone working in a hospital is a doctor. Not everyone working in a law firm is a lawyer. Those environments include people who are trained to do other things. If we can't solve the problem by training people explicitly for different roles within an architecture firm, perhaps the problem will fade anyway. Eventually, with advances in computer technology, architecture firms will require fewer of these support roles and will be able to directly communicate their design intentions to the field.

STEIN There is some sentiment that the people who are attracted to the architecture profession today, with its computerization of production and even design, are much different from the people who were attracted to the profession just a generation ago.

BEACH This sounds like a troubling trend. I don't think that the value systems that make a good architect are necessarily related to the values that make someone good with computers.

STEIN You don't see technology as a liberating influence?

BEACH I'm saying that someone who's attracted to computers per se is not necessarily the person I want designing the built environment. I want someone who's interested in the built environment to design the built environment. I've never been one who thought that technology was an end in itself. It's a tool. I don't think that sitting at a computer all day is necessarily practicing architecture. It seems to me that an architecture office has room for many different types of workers, not just architects.

And I think that's possibly one of the reasons we're in this mess. People are trained to do something valiant on behalf of society, and they end up being technical people. If you want to disseminate architecture, let's take advantage of all these architecture graduates. Let's find clients, let's find projects, and put young people to work in ways that actually inspire them and their communities. A young Dutch architect, with a little boost from the government, could probably do something really interesting for a corner store somewhere or for a neighborhood group that otherwise might never cross paths with an architect. There's no reason why that can't happen here. ■■■
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It was a beautiful crisp morning in Jerusalem in the spring of 2000. I was sitting at my office desk in the downtown neighborhood of Rehavia, surrounded by the pleasant busy-ness and background noises of my staff at work. I was thinking through the planning of the new town of Shilo — a community for 80,000 residents to be built adjacent to the 3,200-year-old Israelite temple and political capital. Much of my work in Jerusalem has involved a similar merging of the old and the new, which is such a persistent pattern in Israeli architecture and design.

The phone rang. It was Deb, my wife and friend for life, with the news that her fellowship had come through for studies at the Kennedy School of Government (KSG) at Harvard. We spent the next weeks excitedly discussing the long trip to New England, which was to entail Deb’s studies, new schools for our four children, and a professional adventure for me. Over the next few months, I put my Jerusalem office on a footing which would enable me to manage and work from afar. Thus began a period of geographical and psychological zig-zagging, which was manifested professionally and personally through, on the one hand, our family’s Boston experience, on the other, the harsh realities back at home in Israel, and then, on the third hand, the merging of US and Israeli concerns over the past few months since we have returned home to Jerusalem.

Cambridge embraced us with a mixture of hot air and humidity. The other nine Israeli fellows at the Kennedy School and their families were all cheerful and excited. KSG turned out to be extremely friendly, and we settled in nearby Brookline, just in time to find out it was even hotter than Cambridge. "God," I wondered, "is there any cooler air here?"

"Sure," replied architect Scott Richardson of Gorman Richardson Architects (GRA) at the end of my job interview. "Hopkinton gets cool in the winter. In the meantime, you may take off your ti..."

He was then more specific: "We dress casually but work professionally."

And so we did. I found myself completely immersed in a most challenging project: a new campus for EMC Corporation. Days flew by. GRA was in the middle of a growth spurt. I could feel the true heartbeat of America, and this was a fascinating sensation. We were busy developing our teamwork, adopting new managerial processes, perfecting GRA’s project management procedures, and producing presentations. While totally magnetized by the size and scope of our project, I could hardly help noticing the first grim signs of the downturn in the US economy.

Back at home, matters were quite different. I flew back and forth several times to maintain and oversee my Jerusalem office operations. Thanks to the Web, e-mail, and good telecommunications, I was able to continue to manage my office from the US. My visits were used for site supervision and signing new contracts. The overall planning and construction environment in Israel was changing rapidly, due to political developments in our region. Since 1993, Israel had been engaged with its Palestinian neighbors in the controversial Oslo peace process. Endless efforts were put into negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. Most aspects of day-to-day life in Israel, from land and water use to security
our minds, it was important for us to join our friends, neighbors, and family. Upon our return, we found a completely different country from the one we had left only a year and a half earlier. The changes were overwhelming: soaring unemployment (10.5 percent of the workforce); government budgetary cutbacks of 5 percent; an economy close to stalling; and above all, an IT crisis, with hundreds of once promising start-up companies slipping into liquidation.

After September 11, those who care for democracy, human rights, and world order found themselves defending the trenches. In Jerusalem, as exposed as we are to terrorist acts, we were apprehensive that our “local” Palestinian terrorists had vowed to carry out similar actions against Israeli citizens. I believe that what struck us beyond the acts of September 11 themselves was the sight of cheerful crowds dancing in the streets in countries around the Middle East, celebrating what they believe was just punishment to the US and other Western societies.

A unique sense of compassion towards the victims in New York and Washington is clearly felt here. People in Jerusalem can identify with New Yorkers, not just on the grounds of shared values, but on the basis of common destiny. Since terror hits blindly, the best survival strategy is for every individual to assume personal responsibility, to keep one’s eyes open, and realize that, indeed, we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keeper in the widest sense. We in Israel feel very much at the front lines of the West’s current battle to define and to defend its values. We follow the US operations in Afghanistan with a prayer that these acts will bring an end to some of the terrorist acts.

Architecture? Neither Israelis nor Palestinians have much time to deal with it right now. How can it thrive under such circumstances? Still, possibly the best way of keeping one’s mind sane and clear is to follow the words of Professor Gershtel, my teacher at the Haifa Technion, who 20 years ago told his students: “The essence of architecture practice is to employ the six D’s rule: Dream and Design, Dream and Design, Dream and Design.”

Lior Couriel, Assoc. AIA, is the principal of CACO-Couriel Architecture Construction and Development in Jerusalem and served as senior project manager at Gorman Richardson Architects in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. His work has included urban design, master planning, corporate, and residential projects. He participated in “Architects Without Borders,” the roundtable discussion in ArchitectureBoston’s Summer 2001 “Import/Export” issue.
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covering the Issues
periodical roundup
Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

not easy being green... Architect Maya Lin weighs in on the environment and the American lifestyle in Oprah's February O magazine ("rush hour to nowhere"). She caps her list of things we can each do — driving the speed limit, keeping our cars tuned — with a shot for smart-growth urban planning. The February Herring offers an eye-opening alternative message: a series of articles in a special "Transportation" section highlights technological innovations that will make our cars and traffic smarter. Commenting on the effect of these new technologies, one author suggests, "It's clear that more people will locate farther from urban work centers and commute greater distances" and "further expand the radius settled areas." Not if Oprah has anything to do with it.

squares here... "Just as ancient builders and geometers sought the golden mean, postwar designers strove for the perfect boomerang (not too thick, not too thin), the just-so boomerang, and variations on the hourglass, the artist's palette, the rounded rectangle, and especially the blob." In the February Smithsonian, writer Doug Stewart considers biomorphic design — mid-century design within broader cultural contexts. From Eero Saarinen to Charles and Ray Eames, Alexander Calder to Isamu Noguchi, the TWA Terminal to Perrierware, 1950s designers shed wartime straitjacketed formality and embraced fun-loving curves. Out with machines for living! Long live the blob!

industrial strength... With its usual grace and sophistication, DoubleTake offers in its Winter issue a photographic peek into the visually stunning (yet environmentally terrifying) landscape of Industry. "The landscape industry is forbidden territory to those who don't work in it," notes photographer Andrew Borowick, yet it takes up lots of our land while providing us with gasoline, electricity, and everyday goods. His photos reveal the hidden face of what powers our industrial economy.

Sounds peachy... "Is Atlanta the New Black Mecca?" Citing its "affordable housing, livable pace, and reputation for encouraging entrepreneurship," Charles Whitaker suggests in Ebony's March issue that Atlanta is the "go to city for enterprising African-Americans." So begins the first in a series of Ebony articles on blacks in major cities. Atlanta's physical sprawl regularly makes headlines; Whitaker offers an alternative perspective on the city's growth. His enthusiasm for Atlanta's energy is palpable. Just goes to show that urban design isn't everything.

I know art when I see it... Did you know that Omphalos — the red, pink, and black granite sculpture next to Out-of-Town News in Harvard Square — is named "to acknowledge the many centers of learning in the general Boston area, the spiritual locus of the 'Athens of America'? Or that Thermopyle — at the base of the JFK tower in Boston's Government Center — "focuses the despair of democracy into an image of passionate conviction"? Learn about the ideas and construction of these pieces and other public installations by sculptor Dimitri Hadzi. Christopher Busa profiles the life and work of this artist, who's left his mark on so much of our public space, in the Smithsonian annual issue.

Money matters... Worth sheds one type of light on the subject of money in the March cover story, "The Richest Person in Town." This special report sought out the wealthiest people in America's 100 largest metropolitan areas. (Boston ranks seventh.) Bill Gates and Michael Bloomberg are here, along with many unknowns. But far more interesting than who is on the list is what they've done with their wealth. Consider these individuals' impact on architecture and the built world — or what it could be. Then consider Hyatt hotels worldwide, the top prize for architecture, the renovated IIT campus in Chicago, the South Boston waterfront, countless small arts organizations, museums, an architecturally adventurous bandshell... There's only one name, and one (Chicago) family: Pritzker.

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studios at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.
They might have called this a collection of essays and left it at that.

The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping is a "battery" (to borrow a word from the publisher) of 45 essays written by 13 Harvard graduate students and edited by a team including celebrity professor Rem Koolhaas. Koolhaas — of recent Prada store and Pritzker Prize fame — has astutely observed contemporary urban conditions for 25 years. Under his guidance, these students argue that shopping has taken over cities and changed urban life forever.

This book is most easily defined by what it's not: It's not about street vendors or open-air markets. It's not even about necessity or trade. Moreover, despite appearances — and selected Asian and European references — it's not globally comprehensive.

What is here are discussions of shopping as leisure-time activity focusing on department stores, malls, and other venues for dispensing with disposable income. Like Koolhaas' now-common anti-polemic polemic, Shopping attempts to avoid comment, critique, and directives. Instead, this work illuminates what we too often take for granted, and chat, indeed, is its strength.

Nevertheless, disposable income is a product of the Industrial Revolution, so it should be no surprise that the rapidly rising pace of leisure-time purchasing parallels the rapidly rising growth of industrial and post-industrial economies. Yet this explanation is largely ignored.

Several excellent essays examine specific architectural innovations (air conditioning, the escalator), moments of retail significance (London's Crystal Palace), and phenomena that have affected retail space ("Nikevolution." the bar code). Several authors offer interesting observations, noting that the market economy has become the dominant global standard, that shopping changes to keep up with the times, and that the city has been reduced to a shopping metaphor. As discerning Koolhaas book-buyers have come to expect, the editors offer compelling diagrams, photos, and hypergraphics, including: a photo "graph" using Manhattan as a unit of retail area (world retail area = 33 Manhattans); side-by-side, same-scale comparisons of shopping-center floor plans; and in the essay "Relearning from Las Vegas," diagrams from the 1972 classic redone for 2000, illustrating Shopping's interview with Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown.

Though frequently provocative, this book collectively is no more than its parts. It falls victim to its own hyperbole. Is "shopping arguably the last remaining form of public activity"? Wasn't it the first as well? The book also claims that shopping has recently "mounted an unrelenting transformation of the city." Don't buy it. True, we can now consume Big Macs in front of the Pantheon, but haven't there been plaza cafes for centuries? Shopping's celebration of the extraordinary size of the contemporary retail economy is not the same as proving a total "transformation." As an academic work, Shopping's research is superficial; its words are sloppy, and its distinctions are neither clearly nor carefully made. A product of the era of Madonna media, this book aims for clarity, but for headlines. And with "research" taken straight from the headlines, readers who follow the newspapers will find little that is new here.

The joke is on us. A product of the Harvard Design School's "Project on the City," the Koolhaas-led series of group research theses examining contemporary conditions of urbanity, Shopping is the first of four projected books with the Big H in their titles, as if that branding lends credence or boosts sales. Not a serious academic work, yet too expensive for pop culture — who is Shopping's intended audience? Easily-influenced students, Wallpaper*-buying hipsters, those with an appetite for All Things Harvard. This book is as much an example of consume culture as a critique of it.

Ultimately, much of the Koolhaas/Shopping phenomenon is simply evidence that architect (and architecture students) are finally waking to the dirty little secret that formal design ideally rarely shape cities; the glamour of Prada and the Pritzker aside, this is Koolhaas' real contribution to the field. Central Park was part of a real estate scheme. Haussmann's Parisian boulevards provided political control of the masses in an era of unprecedented expansion. Downtown Boston properties fronting the Big Dig's soon-to-be "open space" will be among the nation's most valuable. Though we teach the oversimplified design result, the reality is that cities have always been market-driven.

In a strong but buried indictment, one author argues, "To a great extent, the architectural and urban planning professions, especially within academic circles, have historically exhibited an allergy to the commercial." The architectural press, too. This is perhaps Shopping's greatest contribution. Cities are complicated and messy, and design is just one ingredient in the rich urban stew. Shopping offers an approach to be applauded, a result to be questioned, yet undoubtedly a subject to be studied. —

Reviewed by
Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA

Gretchen Schneider, Assoc. AIA, teaches the architecture studies at Smith College and maintains a practice in Boston.
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The Ethical Architect: The Dilemma of Contemporary Practice
by Tom Spector
Princeton Architectural Press, 2001
Reviewed by Bradford C. Walker AIA

The subtitle of *The Ethical Architect*—"the dilemma of contemporary practice"—may lead many to expect a dry exploration of the troublesome, if mundane, issues of right and wrong confronting architects in their ordinary course of business: how to deal with unsavory clients, uncooperative consultants, or unfulfilled employees. Fortunately, author Tom Spector dispatches these sorts of issues as the purview of "citizenship ethics"—don't lie, cheat, or steal. Instead, he claims the more specialized ground of professional ethics and offers a much more rewarding view of the landscape of design and decision-making in our discipline.

Ethical practice is based on the proposition that architects have a duty to place the interests of their clients above their own and, where the issues are clear, to place the interests of society above those of the client. The nature of society's interests beyond basic life safety, however, is a perplexing mystery to most. Yet juggling this dilemma—sorting through the ethical issues of individual and common interests—is precisely the reason that architects alone have been granted a monopoly to design buildings. As Spector notes, "the architect's stamp is presumed evidence that not only the architect's, the client's, and society's — and is thus inherently an ethics-based undertaking. Whose values will be applied, and why? A case study examining the 1991 Anshen + Allen design for an addition to the Salk Institute illustrates the point. Is the architect's purpose to protect the original vision of Salk and Kahn? To preserve the position that the buildings and landscape have assumed in the canon of American architecture? To maintain the Institute's viability as a place to work? Spector deftly demonstrates the various ways the structures of moral philosophy illuminate the decision-making that architects face every day. Other case studies examine ways to evaluate Wright's Guggenheim or to weigh the conflicting virtues of open space versus affordable housing in San Francisco. Along the way, Spector weighs in with opinions on many contemporary issues, including the ethically dubious drive for the licensing of interior designers and the true purpose of building codes.

Throughout, Spector informs and cautions, as he demonstrates the imperative for architects to again "co-join" their desire to be both conscientious professionals and good designers, because they are in fact the same thing.

Bradford C. Walker AIA is a principal of Ruhl Walker Architects, Inc., in Boston and is co-chair of the Boston Society of Architects Ethics Forum.

Form Follows Finance
by Carol Willis
Princeton Architectural Press, 1995
Reviewed by Matthew Kiefer

It's a now-familiar story: In the last decade of the 19th century, the rise of office-based enterprises and the separation of managerial and clerical functions from manufacturing activities, coupled with the perfection of the elevator and steel structural skeleton, produced a remarkable new building type. The skyscraper soon came to dominate the skylines of two cities in particular, with two very different results: New York, with its tall slender towers, and Chicago, with its lower, block-like buildings. In *Form Follows Finance*, Carol Willis tells the lesser familiar story of how these two building types evolved as the requirements of the speculative office building were adapted to the particulars of local ordinances, market cycles, lot sizes, and land values. She makes a brisk but convincing case that these factors were far more influential than differences in corporate image-making, cultural aspirations, or stylistic fashion.

Virtually all the office buildings of the skyscraper era were speculative enterprises — in Cass Gilbert's phrase, "machines to make the land pay" — intended to deliver natural light, a standard module of two perimeter offices opening into a shared clerical anteroom, and reliable elevator service.

But accommodating these market imperatives had to contend with local conditions. Lower Manhattan had small lots and oddly shaped blocks. Land values varied widely based on proximity to the commercial epicenter at the intersection of Wall and Broad Streets. Until 1916, New York had no building restrictions. These factors produced tightly clustered, slender, ever-taller towers, at a rate which alarmed New Yorkers sufficiently to secure the passage of the city's 1916 zoning setback ordinance, which in turn produced the zigzag towers for which Manhattan then became famous.
Money and the Power: Making of Las Vegas Its Hold on America
Sally Denton
Roger Morris
pf, 2001 (hard); age, 2002 (paper)
reviewed by
Simpson FAIA
940. Tom Hull, the owner of
eral hotels in Los Angeles, was
is way to Salt Lake City when
ad a flat tire on the outskirts of
Vegas. While waiting for help,
as amazed at the amount of
ring traffic and decided that it
ld be a good place to build a
hotel. Hull bought 60 acres
$100 per acre and within a year
ned the El Rancho, featuring a
ming pool to entice
ning motorists. Soon afterward,
ers followed his lead. Bugg
el arrived in 1942 and, backed
ob money, began to invest
ily in local establishments like
Golden Nugget and the
nier. Thus began a building
m of mythic proportions —
that continues to this day.

What is it about Las Vegas? A
fluence of money, power,
tics, entertainment, and
ruption, it has a curious grip on
American psyche. A place of
ettered imagination and
vagrance, where all things seem
isible, it is a world-renowned
ation resort with more hotel
ms and convention activity than
other.

The Money and the Power is a
researched history of modern
Vegas that tells the story of
the city to come to be what it is,
posing the root structure that
ects everything and everybody
town. It's a rich mix of Holly-
glamour, mob connections,
ness acumen and, yes, civic
tue.

One of the things that characterize
Vegas is that it's both an idea and a
place, and the place-making is
hugely important. This mundane
but powerful fact was famously
articulated by Robert Venturi and
Denise Scott Brown in their study
Learning from Las Vegas. From the
very beginning, the people who
built the city understood that the
architecture was an integral part of
their success. Like a high-stakes
poker game, each new hotel placed
a bigger and bigger bet on the
table, and all bets paid off. Today's
newest resorts contain thousands of
rooms and millions of square feet,
amply demonstrating the power of
design to create and sustain
illusion.

Whether or not you are a fan of
Las Vegas and the values that it
represents, The Money and the
Power is a good read. There are
lessons here for all of us, especially
design professionals. Built on a
scruffy patch of desert in the
middle of nowhere, with nothing
in particular to recommend it, Las
Vegas has become the fastest-
growing and most prosperous city
in America. It is the ultimate
designed environment —
everything there came from
somewhere else. The Money and the
Power goes to the heart of this
phenomenon; it's a good look at
what cities are made of — not only
concrete, steel and glass, but also
the passions and the power of those
who create them.

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Bobos in Paradise: The Now Upper Class and How They Got There
by David Brooks

Simon & Schuster, 2000

Reviewed by
Julianna Waggoner, Assoc. AIA

They're smart! Playful! Rich!
Funky! Sensible! Eclectic! They're
covetously acquisitive, yet truly
concerned. And they're in charge.

In this work of "comic sociology,"
David Brooks posits that Bobos —
the Bourgeois Bohemians — are
the new American elite. His freshly
coined term describes the "highly
educated folk who have one foot in
the bohemian world of creativity
and another foot in the bourgeois
realm of ambition and worldly
success" — an amalgam of '60s
revolutionaries and '80s capitalists.
Bobos are a Sundance catalogue
to life.

Well, now we know what to call
all those folks who mix spirituality
and concern for the environment
with corporate hyper-achievement
and concern for the stock market.
With some careful editing, though,
we could have found out in about
half the time. Brooks' theory is
pertinent and the book is generally
amusing and occasionally quite
funny. But Bobos began as a series
of articles and, unfortunately, it
reads that way.

Despite its loosely corralled
structure, the book leaves the
reader with an understanding of
today's power class. Brooks
gracefully acknowledges his own
Bobo status, and then joyfully
dissects the societal group and its
underpinnings.

Boboism operates on several key
points: self-actualization, contin-
uous professional achievement,
reconciliation of philosophical
opposites, and, apparently, unbrid-
dled consumption of caffeinated
beverages. Bobos acquire expensive
material objects that indicate the
owner's Sensitivity to The Great
Rhythms of Life (natural slate
shower stalls, for example). Bobos
believe in self-indulgence, but only
in the service of self-improvement.
(Bobos don't just "enjoy orgasms;
they achieve orgasm.") Corporate
Bobos monitor the bottom line,
but prize kooky disheveled
geuosities, workspaces designed like
'60s-style open classrooms, and
Silly Putty as a creative tool.

Brooks asserts that Bobos are
politically correct, and he fairly
thoroughly lambasts WASPs, but
regrettably missing is any signifi-
cant assessment of the impact of
gender or race. Bobos are still
primarily white guys.

Design professionals may be both
amused and dismayed to discover
that some of their current pet
concepts - "smart growth" and
"sustainable development" — are
perfect illustrations of the Bobo
reconciliation of opposites. Brooks
waxes poetic over Jane Jacobs,
author of The Death and Life of
Great American Cities, dubbing her
"proto-Bobo" for her New Urban-
ist-style suggestions about the
organic structure of communities.

The book closes with an unwitting-
ly poignant pre-September 11
focus. Describing political life,
Brooks notes that "passions are
muted. Washington is a little dull."
He portrays his generation as
"largely unscarred by economic
depression and war," yearning for
"an updated version of that sense of
service, of that sober patriotism"
expressed by the post-World War II
ruling class: "The Bobo task is to
rebuild some sense of a united
polity, some sense of national
cohesion, without crushing the
individual freedoms we have won over
the past generation." Hmm. Sounds
like our current national debate.

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Site Work
Web sites of note

Center for Responsive Politics
www.opensecrets.org
“Your guide to the money in US elections.” See who’s given what to whom. Check out the winners of the ambassadorial lottery. Track the big contributors to your senators and representatives. Find out who your neighbors are really supporting. It ain’t a secret.

American Numismatic Association
www.money.org
ANA was chartered by Congress to “promote the study and collection of money...for research, interpretation, and preservation of history and culture from ancient times to the present.” To promote the collection of money? Isn’t that the job of the IRS?

Marketwatch
www.cbs.marketwatch.com
There’s a lot to be said for not knowing what the market is doing today. But if you don’t subscribe to the blissful ignorance strategy, you can log on anytime to “Marketwatch” for an instant shot of adrenaline.

The Salary Calculator
www.homefair.com/homefair/calc/salcalc.html
Much more fun than video games. Enter your current salary and community, then pick a fantasy destination. The Calculator compares costs of living and tells you what your equivalent salary would be.

The Cheapskate Monthly
www.cheapskatemonthly.com
OK, so you can’t be too much of a cheapskate — you have to subscribe to this site. But you’ll get all kinds of neat money-saving info, like how to make your own Gatorade.

Eddie Money
www.eddiemoney.com
How can you forget “Two Tickets to Paradise” or “Baby Hold On to Me” or “Take Me Home Tonight”? Face it — you can’t.

What’s a Guinea? Money and Coinage in Victorian England
www.wikiecollins.demon.co.uk/coinage/coins.htm
Remember all those Victorian novels filled with characters saying, “That’ll be three bob, guv’nor”? At last, a real reader’s service — a guide to Victorian currency. Now you, too, will know that 43 pence is three shillings and sevenpence. Just don’t ask about the farthings.

We’re always looking for intriguing Web sites, however murky the connection to architecture. Send your candidates to: epadjen@architects.org
When I describe where I live now, I like to say that I was thrown out of Paradise. In truth, I left voluntarily. Paradise was where my wife and I bought our first home, a small, two-bedroom Cape Cod-style house in a 1940s development. Young couples with small children owned most of the houses, which sat on tiny lots. When the families grew, they moved out, because the lots were too small to expand. Barely 15 years after we left the neighborhood for a larger home, the area had almost completely repopulated itself with couples much like we had been, men and women in their early thirties, with one or two children and possibly a third — and the prospect of a move — on the way.

Not so long ago, I walked back in time, into a similar Paradise. The site this time was Five Fields — The Architects Collaborative’s 80-acre development in Lexington, Massachusetts. TAC developed Five Fields immediately after its better-known experiment in suburban living, Six Moon Hill, also in Lexington. Many of the architects lived at Six Moon Hill and wanted to apply their expertise to a larger site where they could exert near-total control. Because the AIA code of ethics prohibited them from directly owning a development, they created a company called Site and Shelter, Inc. that purchased the former Cutler Farm. With the active participation of the legendary Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius, a TAC partner, they started selling pitched-roof, shoeboxy, International Style one-family homes to young professionals. By 1952, the complete plan had evolved. TAC offered 62 lots around a five-acre Common Land. Fifty years later, no lot has been subdivided, and the lovely common area, which wraps around twin ponds landscaped with weeping willows contributed by resident Hideo Sasaki, is still open for Frisbee, touch football, swimming in the community pool, or Capture-the-Flag, as it has been for five decades.

I visited Five Fields for the first time earlier this spring, in the company of Sam and Vivian Berman, one of the original homesteading couples. They had moved to Boston from New York City, and they knew they wanted to live in a contemporary house. Vivian, an artist, had heard of Walter Gropius. Sam, who worked in his father’s trucking company, had not. Of the several home types available, they chose the “Maxipac,” a 2,500-square-foot, bi-level, concrete-block rectangle designed by Gropius and the young architect Richard Morehouse. “Everybody who moved in was young,” Vivian recalls. And fecund, too. By 1954, Five Fields’ 56 resident families (some had purchased two lots) had spawned 100 children. The first families were classic “early adopters”: engineers working at Polar or Raytheon; some writers; academics from nearby universities. They created an astonishing community. Children and grown-ups staged summer theatricals; one year, the grown-ups tackled Jean Anouilh’s Antigone, while the children over nine assembled sets and memorized a youth version of Shakespeare’s Tempest. Together they enjoyed hootenannies, swim races, and lavish summer barbecues. Very few of the children went away to summer camp. Because Five Fields was a summer camp, the kids didn’t intermarry, the Bermans theorize because, like their own offspring, they always regarded their Five Fields friends as siblings.

The problem with Paradise is that no one ever leaves. Because the lots were large, the houses could be expanded almost infinitely. “First settlers” like the Bermans still occupy nine of the homes and 17 other residents have been there 30 years or more. Only recently has the natural exodus to retirement communities affected Five Fields. The original, spacious TAC layout had other unintended consequences. There are now only a dozen original TAC designs in the area. The modest, planar, glass-and-clapboard “chicken coops,” as the locals derided them, have morphed into attractive, rambling contemporary homes. Most of the additions enhance the contemporary style of the original houses. But in one instance, a builder razed a TAC house and threw up a jagged, ugly mini-mansion that looms over the interlocking ponds of the Common Ground. Just as no one wants to move out, few can afford to move in. A smaller Five Fields home now costs about $700,000; a larger one just sold for almost $1 million. So here is the difference between the Paradise where I once lived and the magnificently tasteful, TAC-conceived Eden: Mine proved to be re-usable and theirs did not.

Alex Beam is a columnist for The Boston Globe and is the author of two novels and, most recently, Gracefully Insane (Public Affairs), the story of McLean Hospital.
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