Art and Architecture: ‘Build in harmony with nature or not at all.’

By Frederic P. Lyman, AIA

USC Associate Dean Gerald G. Weissbach, AIA, and I have continued a dialogue since breakfast at the last Yosemite Conference on the question: “Is Architecture Art?” If we assume the affirmative, as Dean Weissbach does not, we must of course investigate the question “What is Art?” We find a small book of that title in Aalto’s Clark’s Library at Watt Hall by Count Leo Tolstoy, who tells us, if I may review the book in one sentence, that Art is the Communication of Emotions and is therefore a spiritual or religious matter and that in his time the task of religion and therefore of Art was to secure the brotherhood of all mankind.

If Architecture is to be practiced as Art, then I submit that in our time the task is even broader. We must build in harmony with all nature; build not at all.

Our projects must assist life as do the projects of the bee. A simple thing to design with nature but it requires some reversal of our thinking. Building is an industry strongly affected by the actions of governments, particularly by taxation and credit decisions. We as architects must understand those efforts and persuade our governments to turn them from damaging forces to beneficial results. Los Angeles must be rebuilt in harmony with nature but not by means of arrogant regional planning but by democratic laws.

Land must be leased. Waste must be taxed. Production must be rewarded. Then a magnificent metropolis with 15 faculty members. The present enrollment is 170 students who wanted the program — which was started and shared at Cal Poly Pomona — to continue.

Penalties for taking land away from vegetable and animal life will be so heavy that buildings and parking lots will be roofed with interconnected zoological gardens. Land will no longer be arbitrarily taxed at the whim of government so that fine neighborhoods turn blight and make fuel for the speculator and food for the bureaucracy. Instead, land will be leased to the people who offers the most to the citizenry in goods, services, open space or cash — and the profits will be returned to the people by public dividends.

In other words, we will stop taxing businesses, incomes, sales, the newness of automobiles. Architecture, and begin taxing auto exhaust, auto size, chimney exhaust, noise, sewage, the removal of land from the natural domain, billboards, trash, chemical waste, toxic insecticides, toxic anything. A tax is a penalty and should be used as such, and the proceeds should be returned to the people transgressed.

When these public dividends are paid to all citizens, the leeches of trade will have no more defense. The bureaucracy will wither and trade union monopolies will be dissolved along with corporate monopolies. When we can ask three carpenters’ unions to bid on a job, craftsmanship will return and the art of architecture will move again at last from the imagination to the site. In order to perform our task, the structure of the Southern California Chapter/AIA must be developed to page 4.

April encounter at SCI-ARC

By Shelly Kuppe

A festive Open House at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-ARC) is being planned for the April 8 Chapter meeting. The school is located at 1800 Berkeley Street, Santa Monica. The program will begin at 5:00 P.M. As guests arrive, wine will be served on the “Piazza Sci-Arc.” Chapter members will be able to visit student cubicles, talk with students and faculty, and view student work of the past year.

At 6:00 o’clock, discussions on educational philosophies will take place with educators, students and Chapter members, including those who have taught and lectured at SCI-ARC. Topics to be covered will be Energy and Resource Consumption, Computer Technology, Building Systems, Political, Economic and Social Problems, and Video as an Architectural Education Tool.

At 7:00, a student-prepared dinner with wine will be served on the third-floor SCI-ARC Penthouse and Deck. Cost of the dinner is $5.00, if paid in advance by mailing the enclosed raise reservation envelope, and $6.00, if paid at the door. Members will be billed to satisfy unmet guarantee. Deadline for reservations is April 4, 1975.

At 8:30, a multi-media presentation of student projects will begin in the main studio-auditorium. Projects to be included are the “Urban Odyssey,” featured in the July 21, 1974 issue of Home Magazine, and the “Life Planet,” featured at the National AIA Convention last May in Washington, D.C.

At 9:00 o’clock, the Design Forum 75 Panel Discussion will be presented, featuring Chapter members Roland Coates, Paul Kenyon, Cesar PelI, and Frank Gehry, all of whom have been a part of the SCI-ARC Design Forum speakers program this semester. Audience participation will be encouraged.

SCI-ARC, completing its third year of operation, is a private, non-funded, degree-granting, sixth-year school of Architecture and Urban Design. The school was founded by its Director, Raymond Kuppe, FAIA, along with about thirty faculty members and 70 students who wanted the program — which Kuppe had started and shared at Cal Poly Pomona — to continue. The present enrollment is 170 students with 15 faculty members. SCI-ARC may be conveniently reached by taking the San Diego Freeway to the Bundy North offramp, north past Olympic to Nebraska and West Colorado. The school is on the corner of Berkeley and Nebraska Avenue. Parking is available on the corner of Berkeley and Nebraska Avenue. 

April 4: Chapter meeting at SCI-ARC: open house. (See story above.)

April 5: Design Forum 75 Panel Discussion: “Steel in Architecture.” (“Get-off-the-ground,” talk closed announcement.)

April 7: Calendar:

April 8: Chapter meeting at SCI-ARC: open house. (See story above.)

April 15: Exhibition: “New Develop- ment Program: Steel in Architecture.” (Closed announcement.)

April 18: Open house at Cal Poly Pomona: Department of Architecture. (Call Cal Poly for details.)

April 21-23: Exhibition: “New Development Program: Steel in Architecture.” (Closed announcement.)

Inside:
An L.A., ARCHITECT design poster: A.J. Lumsden, DM-M, and the program for the meeting. (Story above.)

Calendar:
April 3, 4, 17, 20: USC Department of Architecture’s Spring Lecture Series. Watt Hall I, 5:00 p.m. Speakers and programs listed on back page.

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At DMJM, design begins with logic. Decisions are made on the basis of reality. The use of a logical approach in the analytical phase allows a more comprehensive development and breaks down aesthetic biases. One of the basic notions of the DMJM design methodology is to expand our visual language beyond the monumentality of "architecture as a temple," and allow the natural development of an unselfconscious, nonmonumental aesthetic. Such a design system, being inclusive, ad hoc, and opportunistic, tends much more to the vernacular than the academic.

What has inhibited inclusive design processes in the past is an abstemious minimal elitism and the classical tradition. The escape from the classical proportioning system allows a response to program criteria, human and environmental data, and may result in the development of nonsymmetrical plans and buildings with different facades and variations in section.

Design is never done simply on the basis of this or that is a nice looking structure. If a solution inhibits or ignores certain factors that would be beneficial to human habitation, that solution is altered or rejected. In architecture, qualities that enhance the human condition are more significant than artistic objects that compromise social needs.

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DANIEL, MANN, JOHNSON & MENDENHALL

L.A. ARCHITECT April 1975
IN THE NEWS

A three-day course in "Effective Marketing of Architectural Engineering and Construction Services" to be held April 4 through April 6 at the Beverly Hills Ramada Inn under the auspices of UCLA Extension's Department of Continuing Education and Mathematics. The course will deal with all stages of project planning, the use of the new media, and practical tips on how to prepare presentations. Course coordinator is F. Brachard, director, Construction Systems Institute, City College State University of Arnold and Ott (delivered to Ph.D. consultant to Woodward-Clyde and Associates). Daily sessions are scheduled for 1 to 5 p.m. on April 4 and from 1 to 5 p.m. on April 3 and 4. For more information, call UCLA Extension at 8253-344 or 1295.

Spring Semester Lecture Series at UCLA. "Aspects of His Work and Interests," Thursday, May 1, Watt Hall I at 5:00 p.m.; and "What now?, Thursday, May 8, Watt Hall I, at 5:00 p.m. Further information about the see/AIA Design Awards Committee may be obtained from the Department of Architecture and Design, 203 South Robertson Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90025.

APPOINTMENTS

AIA, One of its senior members, Ron Meza, AIA, Wertheimer, AIA, and Marvin Thompson, visiting UCLA critic; Gerald Weisbach, leading contemporary women in architecture, will present "Women in Design: The Next Decade," a two-day conference at the University of California-Berkeley, March 7-8. Two hundred women in attendance heard addresses by Ellen Perry (University of Washington), Barbaraрез (University of Washington), Jane Thompson, and married to John F. Bradt, the Beverly Hills Ramada Inn and the Los Angeles Times, available from the school at 3801 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90027. The Raymond Pizagger Partnership, Vector Architects, has been appointed 1975 Chairman of the National AIA Design Awards Committee, of which he has been a member since 1973. James J. Souder, a member of the Southern California Chapter and President of Souder, Clark, Griffin and Associates, Inc., Health Services and Hospital Consultants in Encino, has been appointed to the AIA Committee on Architecture for Health. Jim also serves as faculty advisor to the American Hospital Association's Institute on Health Facility Planning and Design at UCLA School of Public Health in March. Leonard Brown, AIA, Stuart Greenfield, AIA, and David Oakley AIA — all members of the Pasa- dana Chapter — are other Southern California members of the Committee on Architecture for Health.

What is Art?

Continued from page 1, oped as a monitor of Los Angeles Metropolitan government. There must be direct representatives of the Architects to the County Gov­ ernment and spirit of cooperation be­ tween professionals within our jurisdiction.

In the future, the Architects may further develop systems of architectural selection based on qualifications, and not on "direct mail marketing" or other forms of advertising, whether or not recommended by our national organization — there must be re­ solving within the profession.

With the Medical and Legal Pro­ fessions we must establish Profes­ sional corps, so that rank is deter­ mined by skill and services are per­ formed in accordance with need. In manufacturing, the dictum of mean human creativity, but a profession will give a chance to its ability to needs, it is obvious that we are already the willing slave of art.