
Architecture is inevitable

Regarding the architects' integrating skills,
and their position in contemporary society

Excusatio non petita

First / Some questions and a context

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Inma E. Maluenda / Enrique Encabo

Do you think the architectural profession has changed?

And if so, do you feel the change is positive?

How do you think society perceives the profession of an architect?

What is the most urgent task architecture should face right now to affirm its place in the contemporary society?

Why is it still worth being an architect?

In order to complete the research we asked a number of professionals who have a direct relationship with architecture (as practicing or knowledgeable experts in the field) their opinion on a number of issues, those issues implicit to the main text. The questions were in each case combined, in order to produce variations in the content and timing of the responses. These have been followed verbatim.

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Finally, I advise you never to let greed for glory impel you to embark rashly on anything that is unusual or without precedent. Everything that is to be realized must be weighed and considered in the minute detail. For to have others' hands execute what you have conceived in your mind is a toilsome business; and who is unaware of the complaints that always greet any proposal to spend someone else's money as you think fit?¹

Leon Battista ALBERTI
De re ædificatoria. Book IX, chapter XI

What and for whom. And the how (do not forget)

Self-questioning also involves asking oneself about the world, or maybe the other way around, goes the self-help cliché. There is some truth in this. The following pages are a result of this questioning and reflect on whether architecture is more than the architect's way of life. This is much discussed and more will be said; it seems the times oblige. That it's us who do so now is not the product of our own competence, but partly of chance, and of the obstinacy of others (see acknowledgments).

To whom do we address: anyone who shows an interest, even circumstantial, in architecture. Rather than certainties, a succession of clues will be offered throughout the text. Although the origin of the text is scholarly, this is not an academic text. Although historical or artistic references are used, nor is this a historic treaty or art theory. Although some clues are offered, if you are really interested in what is outlined here, follow them. An apology for the abundance of quotations, it is always nice to be accompanied. A note about these: the established text versions have always been used, in both Spanish and English. Relevant indications are made when the authors have translated texts themselves. The concept of the title, despite its unmistakable similarity, is not taken from Leland M. Roth's opening affirmation in *Understanding Architecture*². In any case, *in extremis* recognition of this coincidence is hereby made explicit.

Methodology: to think aloud (in writing) and extract some rules; involve others in the soliloquy, if such thing is possible. As we have done since we began teaching at this School of Architecture, in 2004 and 2006, and as we have always done when facing our own work. Our experience and knowledge can clearly be improved, hence we have trusted our search of answers both in pertinent analysis and in the assembly.

Our gratitude to the director of this school, Miguel Gómez Navarro, for inviting us to participate in the development of this text, as well as to all the voices included in parallel, more than twenty, a series of architects or closely related professionals. Our thanks to all for their generosity in response to our persistent curiosity.

1. Leon Battista Alberti. *On the Art of Building in Ten Books* trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 318.

2. *Understanding Architecture. Its elements, History and Meaning* Leland M. Roth (NY, Harper Collins, 1993), p. 1. «Architecture is the unavoidable art. In every moment, awake or asleep, we are in buildings, around buildings, in spaces defined by buildings, or in landscapes shaped by human artifice.»

Do you think the architectural profession has changed?

And if so, do you feel the change is positive?

Marcos Cruz

There is no doubt that the architect's profession is changing. There is a greater need to work in an interdisciplinary manner now, and the computerization of the design processes, procurement and fabrication are clearly transforming the crossover between different areas of expertise. To include architects, artists, engineers, landscape architects and environmentalists, quantity surveyors, urban designers, designers, biotech scientists, etc. So different from the "creative genius" that dictated the process from start to end, the architect today is more the conductor of a complex network of specializations that influence the design process from day one. This brings opportunities to create new ways of practice, creativity and innovation in the new in-between fields that are not constrained by the restrictions of the current profession.

Emilio Tuñón

Yes, definitely yes. I think this transformation has something positive that has to do with the expansion of processes in time...

Ángela García de Paredes e Ignacio Pedrosa

Society demands at all times adequate responses to its needs and desires: professions adapt to give a more precise reply, and ours is changing. On the one hand, by the greater complexity that is now required; on the other, especially in our country due to the "depression" we are experiencing, as a result of the distortion that has occurred between the limited work supply and excess of professionals available.

Also, the growing regulatory framework and technical complexity of construction demands new ways to develop our work. New professionals and mechanisms are incorporated to projects and project management to ensure an appropriate response, within an increasingly complex organization.

This adaptation of the profession to reality will only be positive if it is possible to match the specific interests of Architecture with the satisfaction of the conditions that society imposes.

Some questions and a context

In Finland, architects and forest rangers have a higher social status than in other countries, they form a sort of aristocracy to which Aalto's ancestors belonged (they were forest rangers).

[...] Before the age of 30, Aalto had built an agricultural cooperative's headquarters, the Turun Sanomat building, the Viipuri library and the Paimio sanatorium, all thanks to competitions won. This information gives us an idea of the atmosphere in Finland, more than evidence of Aalto's genius. If Aalto had grown up in any other democratic country (Switzerland, for example, or the United States) he would never have received, in 1929, the first prize for a project like the Paimio sanatorium. His wings would have been clipped before taking flight, or he would have been overwhelmed by commitments. Nothing reveals more clearly the spiritual leadership of a country than its administration's ability to recognize the best talent from the beginning, and to trust them.³

Sigfried GIEDION
Space, Time and Architecture

Mirrors are impertinent; well used they have a bad reputation: they demand, if not the truth, an exercise of reasonable honesty. And though it might seem otherwise, they do not demand judgment. Rather they require self knowledge, to avoid the discomfort of seeing what had until then gone unnoticed, which we believe is good. This is a tale that, in a way, aspires to be a mirror: our mirror, with which we hope to get to know ourselves better. Perhaps beginning by revealing these intentions is not the best idea, but, at the risk of exposing ourselves, we believe that honesty is important.

We were asked about something so vague as "the integrating role of the architect". The question was also formulated with the word *central*. "Go write", they said. And being architects (and aspiring mirror installers), we had no choice but to do it *from within*. What are the architect's merits to claim a *central* role in society? Why should it be subject of special consideration? If it exists, is this prevalence fictional?

Consider first the relevance of the question itself, if the given time or place are relevant, is it a necessary question. In recent months, we have witnessed the funeral of Oscar Niemeyer, his coffin in Brasilia received head of state treatment. A show so amazing and alien to us as everything in the stratosphere reserved for the privileged. The reappearance of these honours now seems both beautiful and disturbing, while emphasizing the painful contrasting truth: the architect's loss of status in our society.

Something similar to the identity Giedion intends in the above text: an identity that could be established in terms of what we conventionally call *social status*. Actually, Giedion does not say too much about Aalto, but describes his environment and the place he occupies – his words infer he is interchangeable with other colleagues. To read now that description whispers of the quasi-geological past of an unrecognisable profession. Perhaps to talk of

3. *Time Space and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts. First edition of 1941.

José Luis Vallejo < Ecosistema Urbano

Undoubtedly. It is a different context, socially, technologically, economically... globally. We were educated to practice the profession within a model that no longer exists, with an outdated worldview provided by an education system that continues to train architects with nineteenth century techniques.

Architects have always had to reinvent ourselves and we continue to redesign our profession to give a more appropriate reply to a new context that continues to mutate. Transformation is necessary and therefore positive. Renovate or die.

Jon Aguirre Such < Paisaje Transversal

The architectural profession has not yet been transformed; it remains rooted in old structures that have led us to this situation. While there are increasing voices and professionals demanding change and actually starting out new careers, trying to promote an architectural paradigm shift, many are still hoping that “things will return to the way they were”, return to the previous line of work prior to the outbreak of the housing bubble –as if people were holding their breath while weathering the storm. But that will not happen. Architecture, like society itself, is facing a paradigm shift, we have the duty to promote new practices and new ways of doing architecture. Change is not only positive, it is vital. We cannot continue to perpetuate the figure of the architect as a creative genius or the architectural profession as something alien to society and social needs. Architecture should set aside building to focus more on construction or reconstruction. Architecture, as we have known it until now is doomed to extinction.

PKMN (pac-man)

The architectural profession has not only been transformed, we believe it will never be “only” what it was. The opening up of the profession or, rather, of the architectural discipline, reveals a much more attractive and complex future, uncertain as it may be for architects. The rupture of a model “that functioned well”, either by saturation or obsolescence, requires new ways of development, in this case architectural. It is also clear that it is easy to experience an inertia towards change and even more naturally, to fear a departure from previous comfort zones. Any dissolution of such an accommodated position appears a priori to be positive. Perhaps the question is: at what cost? Or better yet: at the expense of whom?

Iván López Munuera

Architecture, like any other discipline, is continuously altering in its configuration, always being a profession of present times. That is, responding to daily needs and challenges. In the same way that society changes its daily routines, so does architecture.

And it does this not only in the definition of what architecture is or the delimitation of what or who architects are, but also in its relationship with the media and reactions to its output. It is not a conversation between experts, an organicist vision that goes from an active-subject to a passive-recipient, but a debate full of double-entendres, misunderstandings and conflicting positions.

I do not think there can be a negative consideration towards a transformation linked to the present. Turning away from current realities and challenges would end its

this «social status» as if we were in a nineteenth-century novel is somewhat antiquated; but for lack of a better term –the word *role*, is also valid– we could explore, then, how to define the architect’s *social position* and if it is possible to surmise from this the *particular condition* what we are inquiring here.

Although this text does not deal strictly with sociological aspects, we may have to resort to them occasionally. That status –always understood as the relative position of a social agent in its environment– has passed, in the case of the architect, from a *princely* level of treatment (we will see more examples) to a sort of *demobilization* and integration in civil society. Figures show a gradual proletarianization of the collective in Spain and a very significant and growing rate of emigration. This loss of status is not just economic or recent: although this has emerged during the construction sector’s *crash*, it has its origin (in Spain) in the mid-nineties, with the liberalization of land and of professional fees. An unregulated housing market used as a method of enrichment, and its planner, as a necessary evil, turned into the maker and ultimately made responsible for the disaster. Official statistics show little doubt and clearly demonstrate this phenomenon: the construction industry has been left in a state of *shock*. In our country alone and in the period between 2007 and 2010, the number of building permits filed for construction went from 668,719 to 79,891, a drop greater than 88%. Undeniable indicators such as cement production also tell of a fall from 54,721 tonnes in 2007 to 22,102 in 2011 (60% less). There seem to be no signs of improvement in the near future: in Spain, the Sareb (Spanish company for the Management of Assets proceeding from Restructuring of the Banking System) plans to start demolishing unfinished housing or promotion developments (the so-called *zombie homes*) in 2016, due to the extra cost of financing and the difficulty of placing these assets.[4] The worst figure is, in fact, the most important: between the first quarter of 2007 and the third in 2012, the unemployment rate in the construction sector has increased from 6.16% to 26.31%.⁵

These figures are striking, of course, but they should not overwhelm the scenario. After the economic disaster looms a mental crisis: the identity loss of a collective who, suffering from aphasia, fail to recognize their traditional strongholds. Naively, we assume this circumstance is new, and some even expect a return to bygone eras –all will pass, with patience worthy of a better goal; melancholic, they remember those times when architects were *something different...* So, facing this perplexity, the initial question, to re-examine the role played by the architect in our society, seems to be rather relevant.

We are not part of that generation to which progress seemed inevitable –perhaps the previous generation had that experience–, understanding their productive and vital process as a linear history. One could, with some effort, move up the social and labour ladder, following the steady curve of progress, i.e. personal history could only be deepened and prosperity increased. That mythology, referring to the facts, belongs to the past.⁶ Amidst the perfect storm, we lost our story (as others lost theirs before), our rituals, we see ourselves as foreign and we face the formidable challenge of what to do with the rest of our lives.

Let us not decide too hastily if the uncertainty in the answer is (or not) a positive fact. It requires some thought and surprises are possible. It does seem clear, in any case, that this process also involves a deterioration of the identity (that which allows to recognize each other) and can only be understood and mitigated by its analysis. To resume the thread we

4. According to news published in the newspaper *Cinco Dias* on November 9th, 2012.

5. Spanish Ministry of Development data collected by the Spanish National Statistics Institute [Instituto Nacional de Estadística].

6. Richard Sennett explained at the beginning of *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1998) a contemporary alienation phenomenon, he termed as loss of linearity. Sennett used the term to explain the disappearance of an argument that allowed you to stitch up life. For example, economic stability in the United States after World War II allowed the public to provide for a long-term life, which each year added to the previous.

ability to mobilize. A mobilization implying economic, political, ideological, social and symbolic positions. In any case, architectural reality is always multiple, with contrasting and disjointed ways to understand it. This is not negative; in fact, architecture must be a shared arena where opposing positions meet amidst an ongoing debate.

Víctor López-Cotelo

Yes. Perhaps inevitable. A sign of a global evolution that is not always smart, neither necessary nor effective, burdened by restrictive and inflexible routines.

Fernando G. Valderrama

Architecture is the only qualification in Spain that is still biunivocally identified with a profession. This identification is politically incorrect, socially unjust, intellectually erroneous, aesthetically damaging and industrially a suicide.

Current degree studies, whether referring to the legally defined functions and powers of architects or the curriculum, are essentially similar to those defined in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the formal career was created.

For example, architects currently study structure design and have the powers to design and implement structures (Translator's Note: this is the case in Spain) because in the nineteenth century structure was an inseparable part of the formal definition of the building, both of the inside and of the enveloping. Today, a curriculum would not be designed like this; it would consider architectural structure and configuration to be separate fields, equipped with a well-defined interface. Similar reasoning applies to service system design, urbanization and the execution of the works, which today would not be included within a career in architecture designed from scratch.

Yet corporatism, highly visible in anti-Bologna attitudes, has managed to maintain the original attributes unchanged.

Indeed, the legal protection that LOE ('Ley de Ordenación de la Edificación'. Translator's Note: Spanish regulation on construction agents), provides the architect in Spain is non-existent in other countries, something quite unknown, as many architects believe that this protection, being of divine origin, must also be universal.

I will not be the one to propose the unilateral withdrawal from these privileges, and without compensation. However, this monopolization of powers, theoretically a huge advantage over other professionals, has become over time something negative.

Why? Because protection eliminates the stimulus. Since during the execution of a building work it is compulsory to hire not one, but two different professionals, neither worries collectively to provide an added value to the construction process, their client or to society. The good work is linked to the individual sense of responsibility of each professional.

Another example. Architects have the legal authority to draft and sign health and safety studies but, while they will collectively fight tooth and nail to keep this right on the basis of high ethical standards and the importance of safeguarding the integrity of the person, they scorn the skills needed to perform the task as seen in any current curriculum, where safety and health are not listed.

could turn to history, to our history, and even detect those moments when that identity was tested.

However, a warning is necessary: to insist on interpreting it as a cycle and therefore expect «the good old days» to return is an unrealistic narrative, since in the search for the desired answers it ignores the most significant changes. It could even lead to unwanted melancholies that tarnish a contemporary reading of the pretexts that encourage change. Not that the past must not come back (to us); it's just that it will not return *exactly* the same way.

Second

Identities: three stages

The architect with his happy combination of idealism and realism has been praised as the crowning glory of the modern man. Unfortunately, he is the only one who perceives the truth of this fact, while the rest of the world stands aside, without sharing this view. However, I must also join the song of praise, despite the danger of being dragged by the megalomania.⁷

Otto WAGNER

*Architecture: A Guidebook for His Students to
This Field of Art*

Even at the risk of confusing subject with object, this text is on architecture via architects. To provide this identity crisis with a context, it makes sense to analyze how architects see themselves and, therefore, what their aspirations are. Wagner's quote illustrates what architects commonly *think* of themselves. A portrait exists, therefore, perfectly fitting to the topic. It is easy to check: the volume *L'architetto nella storia di Occidente*, by Luigi Vagnetti, functions as a comprehensive compilation of the operational tools and pretexts in an architect's training –also empirical learning which, by imitation, facilitates the passing of the profession from father to son– since Mesopotamia until approximately the 1980's. The text has a university character; it is instrumental and therefore functions as a strictly ordered manual. Its chapters are generally accompanied by the «Generalità: posizione dell'architetto» epigraph, with a detailed description, era by era, of the role. Of Imhotep, for example, which is taken as representative to illustrate the prevalence of an architect in Egyptian society, it describes his different positions: Chancellor of the King, head of Justice, superintendent of the Royal Archives, head of Royal Works, guard of the Gifts from Heaven, Earth and Nile, custodian of the country...⁸ For the purpose, the pyramids he built as a symbolic apex.

Imhotep's case is extreme –as would be Aalto's–, but we can find other examples to reiterate this characterization, such as Leon Battista Alberti, in the prologue of his work

7. Otto Wagner, *Modern Architecture: A Guidebook for His Students to This Field of Art*. Translated by Harry Francis Mallgrave. *Die Baukunst Unserer Zeit*, Vienna, Löcker Verlag, 1979. p. 33. As perfectly explained in the preface of the Spanish edition (by Josep M. Rovira), Wagner's text underwent three editions (1898, 1906 and 1914) since the original publication in 1896 (and written a year before) with the better known title, *Moderne Architektur*.

8. Luigi Vagnetti. *L'architetto nella storia di occidente*, Padua, Edizioni CEDAM, 1980 (Reprint). p. 39.

The same occurs in the other previously mentioned disciplines associated with the Architect's qualification, with varying degrees of harshness. Due to the exclusivity of the qualification, the incentives to acquire skills are limited to those needed to pass the degree.

As a result, the architect, from entering the School, becomes accustomed to addressing only the interesting part of the profession: the plans.

Fortunately, the teaching of projects (if we admit "plan" as "project") and the rest of subjects are quite good, and students end up acquiring many transversal skills that are considered today more valuable for personal and professional development over time.

In contrast, any architect devoting themselves to any occupation other than the implementation of projects –preferably up to concept design–, proposals –preferably singular buildings– where clients grant free liberty –preferably public– and published in journals –preferably glossy magazines - will be flagged as losers.

Let us add one more factor. Students want to choose the studies they fancy, without restrictions; if there are numerous clausus it is of course without their consent. Students, professors and many more people want universities to be free for all. In addition, the legal framework allows private universities to exist, and they are entitled to train new professionals as long as they comply with the Law. Therefore, anyone who wants to train as an architect can do so. And they do in the thousands.

For the perfect storm it only takes an economic crisis, if possible focused on the building sector: this is exactly what we have.

In summary:

- There are tens of thousands of architects
- They are trained to perform many useful tasks for society
- They have been convinced to exclusively engage in only one of those tasks
- The need for this task has fallen dramatically

Possibilities:

- Physically eliminate architects: is illegal and unethical.
- Reduce the output of architects: useless in the short and long term, only a left-wing dictatorship would do this.
- Change the economic environment: is not within reach of architects, it is slow, and would require a new construction bubble.

What is left? Not all architects can do what they want to do, and much less what they have been told they should. One hundred thousand professionals cannot demand from society that they be allowed to work in "their job".

What remains is to diversify: do what we know how to do.

What is stopping this? During the recent course of "Números gordos en la dirección de empresas" (Big numbers in business management) in the Architecture Institute of the COAM Foundation, I asked students to apply the Porter analysis to the architects sector. This analysis is a powerful methodology for understanding the competitiveness of industrial sectors, based on the strength of suppliers and customers, new entrants and substitute products. One section stood out among all the observations: the rivalry among competitors increases dramatically, and with it the degradation of the sector, when the exit barriers in the sector are high, because nobody abandons, however badly it is going.

De re ædificatoria, which speaks of the architectural profession seen from a quasi-absolutist understanding:

To conclude, then, let it be said that the security, dignity, and honour of the republic depend greatly on the architect: it is he who is responsible for our delight, entertainment, and health while at leisure, and our profit and advantage while at work, and in short, that we live in a dignified manner, free from any danger. In view then of the delight and wonderful grace of his works, and of how indispensable they have proved, and in view if the benefit and convenience of his inventions, and their service to posterity, he should no doubt be accorded praise and respect, and be counted among those most deserving of mankind's honour and recognition.⁹

This perspective reveals a view *from above* of the hosting social fabric. One can trace something obvious in a profession that has always relied on the generosity of others, on a certain fortune or on remarkable initiatives: an architect's behaviour has always been of a professional looking for promotion. An illustrated operator confident in his skills to grant safe passage in social climbing. Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, the founding architect, is a perfect stranger without works or portraits;¹⁰ his description of himself does not reveal anything extraordinary, but rather, is based entirely on his work for validation:

But to me, oh, Emperor! Nature has not given me much height, age has disfigured my face and disease has diminished my strength. Therefore, since I am deprived of such qualities, I will reach fame and reputation, I hope, with the help of my science and my books.¹¹

In the definition of Wagner, in the Vitruvius quote, in Michelangelo's biography by Vasari –in which, even filtering the hype (remember it was written during his lifetime)– the social respect surrounding the *Divine* is evident. Or in Giedion's consideration of the profession in Finland, the arguments are similar: although architecture is not a noble profession – many of the architects we know and assume to be important have no aristocratic background, albeit they are certainly wealthy–, it has led to recognition and social advancement through virtuosity. The architect has used this to achieve privileged legitimacy built in view of others. It is not an old idea: Beatriz Colomina has told of Mies' efforts to distance himself from his artisan origins, his obsession with the Knize shirts, his careful appearance...¹² as if being somewhat less than a prince would render impossible the practice of architecture as he understood it. Colomina takes, for example, an anecdote told by Dirk Lohan, his grandson, and interprets it with a class prism: Mies' vomit on the journey from Aachen to Berlin for not travelling with a first class ticket is the vomit of his past, as one rids oneself of an old skin.¹³ According to more recent references, Beatriz Preciado details the representation codes of the architect figure of the time, as seen in an *Architectural Forum* number of 1962:

White men dressed in black (italics are the author's). All (except Bruce Goff and Harris Armstrong) wear a white shirt, dark suit and tie, reaffirming their status and setting a distance from the working and rural class models of masculinity.¹⁴

9. *Op cit.*, p. 60.

10. Delfin Rodriguez Ruiz's foreword to the 1995 edition of *Los diez libros de arquitectura* [The Ten Books on Architecture] by Alianza Editorial makes a complete portrait of the events and representations of Vitruvius' figure throughout history.

11. Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *Los diez libros de arquitectura* (The Ten Books on Architecture) translated by José Luis Oliver Sunday, Madrid, Alianza, 1995. Introduction to Book II. p. 9.

12. B. Colomina, «Mies Not», in D. Mertins (publisher), *The Presence of Mies*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 1994. «When the historians go on and on about Mies' humble origins, Mies insistently keeps his distance from them», p. 201.

13. Colomina reproduces and tells of a familiar tale. The anecdote opens Franz Schulze's volume *Mies van der Rohe. A Critical Biography*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986 –Spanish version by Jorge Sainz, *Mies van der Rohe: una biografía crítica*, Madrid, Hermann Blume, 1986. In the revised edition of the original, published in 2013 by the same publisher and now headed by Franz Schulze and Edward Windhorst, the tale moves to the end of the first chapter (p. 14).

14. Beatriz Preciado, *Pornotopía. Arquitectura y sexualidad en «Playboy» durante la guerra fría* [Pornotopia. Architecture and Sexuality in «Playboy» during the Cold War], Barcelona, Anagrama, 2010, p. 22.

Architects have an extraordinary exit barrier, whether it is vocation or pride. Well, this is all that we can change in the short term.

In your life, except for your football team, you can change even your religion: why should we not to change jobs?

In all other qualifying studies, as indicated at the beginning of this text, the identification with but one way of exercising professionally was abandoned long ago. Not all lawyers are criminalists, not all doctors are surgeons. What would happen if all engineers were determined to do only roads, canals and ports?

The future for those who have studied the career of architecture will not link the personal and professional success with a biunivocal correspondence between their occupation and the exact contents studied in their career.

Those with responsibility or influence in the forming of architects have a simple way to help: maintain an aggressive stance against those who identify the dignity of the architect with a single specific way to develop their work.

Francisco Leiva < Grupo Aranea

I imagine that, for many, much has changed greatly, but for me not so much.

Economic fragility has forced us to be more open, imaginative, flexible, and also more efficient.

Architects have moved closer to society. Their attitude is less passive and begins to engage increasingly in urban processes. They do not wait for the brief to start their thinking process.

Iñaki Ábalos

The answer depends on the context; one thing is the local situation and another the challenges of the profession globally. In Spain we lost almost every battle by reluctance and collective selfishness, and the initiatives of the very young, so highly valued at local media level, cannot be considered alternatives: there have always been very similar outfits (cooperatives, collectives, hyper connectivity, social awareness, etc.) and are, therefore, recurrent and of low impact, whether we like it or not. The true and relevant fact is that the profession has been proletarianized –in one generation it went from aristocratic to bourgeois, and in our times we have seen that status fall to the proletariat, if not directly to the lumpenproletariat. And yet, the rest of the construction sector has been capable of growing sufficiently to compete in foreign markets with great efficiency: the unemployment only affects seriously the unskilled workers and architects; it is something that should make us reflect on what we did wrong. If we look beyond, we see there are huge problems that the profession must respond to in order to abandon their little toy world; the urbanization process of the metropolitan areas on the five continents is introducing scales, ways of working and topographies requiring professionals with lucid and good technical backgrounds, able to interact with different social agents without losing their authority. In fact, the most valued is precisely the ability to lead the strategic vision that gives authority: a large gap between the current context of the here and now, and that of a world that is moving at a different speed and direction.

However seductive –and *alpha*–, it is not a fair or balanced portrait. These examples are normally without regard to context or detail to nuances –Wagner was shocked that 20-25 architects graduated each year from the Vienna School¹⁵– to build an image of the architect as someone smug or at least, lacking awareness of their own attitude and sensitivity or empathy for others. Suffice a temporal and geographically close to Wagner exploration, reading one of Adolf Loos’ texts –like «About a poor rich man», an early twentieth century consumer’s tale bullied by his architect– or Berthold Lubetkin’s speeches, to refute this caricature.¹⁶ Or, in reality, to any of the different movements since 1900 that have repeatedly appropriated the legitimacy for an architecture that reflects the motivations of its time, rejecting the previous or correcting –amid accusations of autism or irrelevance. Mistakes may have been many and serious, but they have never been out of indifference. A revision of tired interpretations compelled by a reiterated sensitivity.

Established men, worldly beings. What could then be your (and our) tragedy? For Wagner or Aalto’s contemporaries –and for Mies, of course–, it’s the integration in a civil society in which jumps in scale (even secretly dreamed or aspired) are no longer possible in the traditional manner, and in which, bad news, there are no noble professions because there are no *great narratives*. And for us? Something more complex and harder: it is no longer about a change in social values that drives us to think about how to move up that scale – something that, even then, was still possible–, but to face –if anything, worse– a contradicting decline, the *Peter Principle*, to regress having reached a supposed level of incompetence.

We should not base our assumptions on idealizations of the condition of the architect that could be described as *magical thinking*. An analysis of this social status presents somewhat less idyllic conclusions: neither the architect has been as consistently privileged as we may assume, nor can the currently shocking situations be regarded as new. The aforementioned Vagnetti book is rich in examples and contextualizes the present hardships. Even among the aristocracy of the profession, instability has always been a regular travel companion. This blurring has different approaches; one of particular interest relates to the nature of architectural practice, to how it affects the social perception of architects and thus their position.

Think, for a moment, in the worst cliché, the most worn out you can think of the figure of the architect, like their clothing/disguise: rimmed glasses, dark clothes (preferably turtleneck, of an ascetic cut), and most likely draped in luxury accessories... Silent and concentrated on the photo (*his photo*). The professional image of the mundane architect is the sublimation of a social snob, a contemporary *flâneur*. One of the criticisms most associated with this cliché is the negative view of the architect as an *artist*. A weapon, casting doubt on his capacity for social commitment. This is a very questionable syllogism and approaches the issue from two complementary extremes, referring to the discipline and the perpetrator thereof. On the one hand, they say, art tends to focus on areas of consensus –be it galleries, museums or daily life– in which the pact with reality is suspended or placed under tension. And it turns out that architecture operates *precisely* in that reality, without the possibility of being overlooked or set aside. Second, the artist is far removed from what we understand as a responsible professional. Both conceptions, the limiting of artistic action to the scope of reality or speaking of the artist as a foreigner, depart from the same prejudice: art (and, therefore, the artist) floats in a

15. *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

16. B. Lubetkin, *Creed* (written in 1955, unpublished). Text included in M. Reading & P. Coe, *Lubetkin & Tecton An Architectural Study*, p. 139-143: «[...] it would be unfair to hold the architects directly responsible for the crippling damage they inflict upon society by disrupting, gutting and devastating the environment; pounding, crushing and pulverising our towns, or incredibilising them with looming terminal lumpen architecture [...] It is perfectly possible to assume that there are innocent architects, but in an absurd world (where one solution is deemed to be just as valid as any other) there can be no such thing as innocent architecture, since there is no art that is not part of the social fabric [...] Every artist is either an apologist or a critic of society. Non-partisanship is always, in practice, support for the status quo, because even when he chooses to make no choice, he is opting for the tacit acceptance of it.»

Eduardo Arroyo

Society has changed its way of looking at architects: previously they were creators of cities and brave buildings and now just solvers of technical-economic-political problems. They've gone from being a creative and critical professional group to another that is technocrat and obedient.

Juan Herreros

No, but obviously it should.

The least one can say is that the prevailing force in our country is the strong resisting effort to maintain a form of practice that cannot cater to the changing conditions we are experiencing.

Paco Burgos & Ginés Garrido

Our profession has existed in diverse manners; it is not a homogeneous activity. It is clear that many of those architects who have had the opportunity to build steadily over the last twenty-five years have now stopped abruptly. This, obviously, has altered the configuration of the profession in our country.

Also it is true that the architects job market in Spain has been disrupted substantially by the crisis we now face. But it is unclear if this circumstance, at the moment, has yet changed architecture's structural mode. The housing market has stalled completely and, therefore, many architects have to work in other professional fields and emigrate; others cannot even enter the job market. But the way of working for those who maintain their offices remains the same. However, the studios that survive the next years, when the crisis eases off, will have to change. They will be affected by increasingly global markets and capital flows, competition will be tougher; hence, we will have more Spanish architects with offices abroad doing work elsewhere. It has already happened in other countries. It is probably easier to look at our profession in our most immediate surroundings; and thus perhaps know how it will be in a few years. Surely there will be a process of concentration and, even though more artisanal small studios will continue to exist, the average office will be larger and impersonal, and within that context the work of the architect will change.

It is difficult to consider positively something as dramatic as the collapse that our profession has seen, but this crisis will certainly be an opportunity to rethink and transform our work, to make it more useful to society.

Leaving aside the exceptions we all know, the average quality of Spanish common architecture can clearly be improved, both technical issues as well as the intellectual aspects. If we think of a more distant horizon, perhaps five years, a transformation that produces a more professional architecture office would be desirable, offices that are more competitive, more technically solvent, more efficient, more interdisciplinary, but also more respectful of our landscape, our cities and with our resources.

protective womb, unable to neither accommodate any critical argument nor raise important questions. And reduces this approach of architecture to an annoying *bibelot* category. On the other hand, it considers or understands reality as a mere experiential truth space, of only successful experiments that open the door to pragmatism. Like any Manichean affirmation –as would also be the contrary, attributing *only* this artistic and *shamanic* nuance to architecture– it forgets too many nuances along the way. It's precisely in the tension where the possibilities of the real find their limit that the best results are produced.

To further explore this idea, we must stop looking at the architect and focus on the work: architecture. Actually, we could establish two concepts that relating architects and their livelihood may help articulate the narrative: the apparent incompatibility of *ars* and *utilitas*, and somewhat derivative of this, the fear of obsolescence arising from the extinction of a model, the craftsman architect.

2a / Nature

Him I consider the architect, who by sure and wonderful reason and method, knows both how to devise through his own mind and energy, and to realize by construction, whatever can be most beautifully fitted out for the noble needs of man, by the movements of weights and the joining and massing of bodies [...] We are indebted to the architect not only for providing that safe and welcome refuge from the heat of the sun and the frosts of the winter (that of itself is no small benefit), but also for his many other innovations, useful to both individuals and the public, which time and time again have so happily satisfied daily needs.¹⁷

Leon Battista ALBERTI
De re aedificatoria. Introduction

17. *Op. cit.*, p. 57-58.

18. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2005.

19. An approach to Arendt's text, in terms of the formation of cities and the public sphere, has been attempted by Kenneth Frampton in *The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects*. Melvyn A. Hill's edition: *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1979, p. 101-30. Berger's reference can be found in his text *Millet and Labour*, included in the compilation of his texts *Selected Essays* (publisher, Geoff Dyer), London, Bloomsbury, 2001.

Architecture is not exactly a commodity. Although this statement may seem obvious, it hides a more profound observation of its very nature as a component of our lives. Hannah Arendt, in the first chapter of her essay *The Human Condition*¹⁸, structures our *vita activa* in three clear sections: labour –referring to the «human body's biological process», life support of vital signs–, work –which «provides an 'artificial' world of things»– and action –as «the only activity that occurs between men without the intermediary of things or matter»–. Hence, architecture, as we traditionally understand it, would fall under «work». According to Arendt's initial definition, the aspect of «labour» does not seem particularly suitable, and its use reveals an approach that could be defined as melancholic. As John Berger timely recalls, we associate labour with the honesty of Millet's peasants or Walker Evans' images.¹⁹ Simple folk's manual activities, without complications: is this not what we *once* had? More than likely, this is the origin of most of the appreciations that proliferate since the nineteenth century referred to the pairing of moral qualities with architecture, building the case of correct «morality» as the architect's ultimate end.

Manuel Ocaña

Yes.

1970: 3 architecture schools, 3,631 architects.

1980: 7 architecture schools, 10,391 architects.

1990: 9 architecture schools, 18,885 architects.

2000: 15 architecture schools, 31,800 architects.

2012: 31 architecture schools, 60,000 architects.

Since the seventies, the housing stock (a useful parameter) has nearly tripled, while the number of architects has increased sixteen fold.

It is not so much about considering if this is a positive transformation, as much as naturally accepting it and striving to assault territories outside the intellectual and physical comfort zones that have become our standard, but are now drowning us.

How do you think society perceives the profession of an architect?

PKMN (pac-man)

In our Spain of prime chorizo sausage (*Translator's note: "chorizo" is also used to describe someone very corrupt*) there seems to have settled an accumulated hatred around the "figure of the architect". Surely deserved by "a few", maybe by "many", but one cannot label a whole collective as an accomplice of speculation, whose responsibilities are rather in the political sphere than the architectural. Many designs are just the representation of programmes, interventions, dreams, pre-conceived in an absurd and disproportionate way. You have to distinguish the certain subtleties that move you away or closer to the alleged "complicity" that many interpreted as derived from a whole *collective*.

The crisis (particularly in Spain) has loaded construction (and by contact, architecture) with negative nuances. We are not interested in giving a local response, instead we wish to find some ways in which we may understand what are the different paths the architect can address to develop his career within society.

As architects, we have developed tools, strategies and concepts applicable to the city varying from public space to the domestic, at different scales and from many different materializations. Thus, architectural design has opened its doors to multiple agents from other "disciplines" in a process of mutual enrichment. Also, those other "disciplines", areas or professions, begin to need "architects" when performing work related to the city. It is here we believe that the architect has to find "his place" in society, in that hybridization that is not part of the actual discipline, but the

The cyclical interest on the most material aspects of the master builder's work, or even vernacular architecture²⁰ –it is striking that, in the latter case, it is normally referred to an *architecture without architects*, when what you want to highlight, in fact, is the absence of a recognizable authorship–, incorporates a high component of sentimentality and also some error in approach. It is often forgotten, for example, that the means of production of architecture (building) is not in the hands of the architect, far from it. It is further intended that we approach it with Luddite purism, something impractical (and somewhat naive) in the current world economic conditions. This essentialist eagerness ignores both aspects, and those who express it often confuse architecture with construction, over simplifying, and committing two errors: contempt for technology and a conceptual incoherence of their own reasoning. Technology forces us to rethink this affirmation because there are other ways that attempt, through a change in the production chain, to transform and retrain this relationship between the architect and product. A change never explored by this regressive idea of architecture as pure craft. As Chris Anderson says²¹, the production possibilities have been democratized to the point of transforming what was a cultural change into a change that may affect the roots of the economy.²² It's early days, but we begin to see the first results, which range from architects who wish to print houses in three-dimensions to building solutions open to this DIY approach. This should, in good faith, help us refine the idea of the architect as the guardian of a closed source or of a sacred fire in need of recovery. An idea, which, as discussed ahead, plays an essential role in this crisis.

20. Proof of this is the extensive literature on architecture without architects, from Bernard Rudofsky's exhibition also entitled *Architecture Without Architects*, MoMA, New York, 1964; Spanish version: *Arquitectura sin arquitectos*, (Buenos Aires, Eudeba, 1973) to books like *Animales Arquitectos: El funcionalismo ecológico de las construcciones animales* [Animal Architects: The ecological functionalism of animal constructions] Lanzarote, César Manrique Foundation, 2001, Juhani Pallasmaa, or *Los otros arquitectos* [The other architects] exhibition catalogue held at the Museum of Natural Sciences in Barcelona in 2003, all reveal that Rudofsky's speech is valid and in full force. Pallasmaa's work also documents this perfectly with a complete bibliography.

21. Chris Anderson, *Makers. The New Industrial Revolution*, London, Random House, 2012.

22. «What started as a cultural shift –a fascination with new digital prototyping tools and a desire to extend the online phenomenon into real-world impact— is now starting to become an economic shift, too. The Maker Movement is beginning to change the face of industry, as entrepreneurial instincts kick in and hobbies become small companies.» *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

Take, secondly, an even more open argument, which goes beyond that candidly “Marxist” understanding of architecture as productive space. The pragmatic approach provides a simple answer: we cannot say, in good faith, that architecture is essential for survival. A product of labour, so to speak. It is not easy to objectify its *value*. We would continue to live, if we had to, in nondescript buildings, but all agree it would be undesirable. Actually, we cannot think of a better guarantee for the survival of architecture than the fact that it represents a yearning for improvement or a higher state of living. Better homes, better spaces, better lives.

To be clear –if it was not already– we advocate architecture as more than construction. It is understood as «work» and, in current times, increasingly as an «action», less dependent on the physical and more on thought. To ignore the influence of architecture as a forming agent of our culture is nonsense, as it would be to release its praxis from necessary ethics. Vitruvius spoke of the condition of architecture as the creator of civilization and, despite its transformations, this condition has not changed significantly. It remains vitally important to understand our context and to decode these pretexts. It's easy to understand if we check the constant appearance of the house as an economic product and political symbol. And not just in the news related to economy: in *Joseph Anton*, by Salman Rushdie –an autobiography of his years under the threat of the Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa*, in which everything occurs in houses - the author identifies his vital uncertainty with the difficulties of finding a home, to the point that the search for «the next house» is almost an *indoor Iliad*. From Bin Laden's million euro slum in Abbottabad, to the confinement of Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian embassy, the «architecture of the home» becomes important as a refuge from a primary symbolic condition; the weather, its invasion or sanctity respectively reflect the very limits of our political system. It's not a product, it's an idea. And yet, it seems that this importance is

understanding of implicit architectural needs in other areas. The change is not only to generate architectural “products”, but “products” that may have a social utility. In this sense, the process will be slow and difficult, as there is a large inertia of the “product” in the field of architecture. If we don’t believe in those “architectural services” ourselves, how can a customer demand them, even if they need them?

Antón García-Abril

As those responsible for the crisis.

Iván López Munuera

There is no single way to understand architecture and therefore no unique perception. To think there is only one type of architecture, made by certain people, with materials defined or fixed closed budgets, would be to establish a kind of innocent knowledge through the ignorance of their own tales. Architecture is not only examples of the housing bubble (the most highlighted by the media and reaches a wider audience), but the research, the relationship systems between people, publications, administration and legislation, university or cultural centre. Architects are not only those who hold a university degree, but those who connect and discuss what is or what architecture could be. Architecture is a network of actors in continuous mobilization.

Luis Fernández-Galiano

Spanish society perceives the architect in a distorted manner. Many believe that it is a glamorous, artistic and lucrative profession all at the same time, under the influence of iconic architecture and star architects. Others associate the profession to the housing bubble and to the worst excesses of the last few decades, when not considering them an unnecessary intermediary between the owner and builder. Neither image describes the struggling reality of architects, always competing with petty economic interests or the deplorable uncultured aesthetics of many. Alejandro de la Sota said that architects must “sell rabbit stew pretending it is rat stew” reversing a popular saying, and this stubborn determination to give more than what society expects of them is an intrinsic part of the creed of this profession.

not fully perceived by society. Richard Sennett –an Arendt disciple– is an expert in analyzing the undercurrents of social activity and in explaining how we relate to each other because of (even due to) what we do. In his essay *The Respect*²³, he describes two pathologies that can be identified with this distance the profession may have incurred: virtuosity and position of superiority.

First, virtuosity, says Sennett, responds to more than extreme use of skills: it contains a seed of misunderstanding. That is, we can admire the virtuous because we do not understand them, we are unable to imitate them, and because their character shows certain traits of antisocial behaviour. Sennett explains this as a «concession of autonomy». This is not the case. To understand each other, be clear here that we do not mean only the usual separation between audience and artist generated by the introduction of certain languages (from abstract painting to atonal music). What is meant is that a certain understanding of architecture, with its own language or own tectonic or public presence, has fostered an aura of virtuosity that has caught on quickly. Even being admired and allowing access to its own cultural circle and its own point of view, has fostered a perception of being an unattainable object; neither sufficiently understood nor allowing a simple replica; and useless for the everyday –with all the counterproductive effect on the «better homes, better spaces, better lives» idea used previously. We cannot claim a central role for the architect if he chooses not to integrate in the surrounding tissue and maintains this separation. How to build those bridges without involving an infantilization of the object is, in itself, an extraordinary challenge.

The difficulty of achieving this derives from architecture being such a culturally complex product. The huge amount of variables incorporated (technological, social, political, economic, artistic...) for both producer and user makes it almost impossible to exercise and implement in a truly satisfactory manner. Therefore, it is not easy for the architect to explain why his work should be assessed in objective terms. The fact is that architecture cannot be measured (or at least not exclusively) in terms of efficiency, competitiveness and material optimization because architecture *does not* support a unique answer –a pattern. As a discipline it moves in the territory of ambiguity and sometimes intuition; architects act in reality as managers of this accumulation of imperfections. This argument –once again a plea for attention– appeals to the decision making of any designer; and, provided the final product is successful enough, these choices may ignore the weaknesses, making them invisible.

Any attempt at objectiveness slips through the fingers of reasoning. As would happen in a science that rarely checks its hypotheses or an art that denies to be such, apparently absurd solutions emerge that only over time –just what we don't have– are revealed to be accurate. It's a fine line that separates knowledge from elitism... and possibly the architect has occasionally crossed it through ignorance or malpractice. In fact, it is not so unusual and could be considered part of the human experience. This disengagement between architect and the surrounding society is even a critical sub genre with its own cultural market: from *Koolhaas' Houselife* –the cleaner's adventures with the evil modern house–, an update of Jacques Tati's *Uncle* (Mon Oncle, 1958), to Tom Wolfe's (feigned) perplexity of his *Mandarin architect*. The caricature – which, as initially acknowledged here, always has some truth– incites the public's smile and the prudent professional's blush.²⁴ It's the poetics of disconnection, fed by the communication media themselves, who forget their

23. Richard Sennett, *Respect in a World of Inequality*, Penguin, 2003.

24. The publication of the *San Rocco* Autumn 2012 issue, the Italian critical review magazine, with the title *Scary Architects* certifies in the clearest way possible the existence of the genre: with the appearance of his parody. In this case, a graphic essay with pictures of decontextualized architects whose objective is to, as the title suggests, scare.

What is the most urgent task architecture should face right now to affirm its place in the contemporary society?

Patrik Schumacher

The modern era has created a new set of infrastructure systems that complement, compete with, and extend beyond traditional architecture. These systems include mechanical systems of transportation (i.e. trains, automobiles, aviation) and various systems of telecommunication (print, broadcasting, telephone, and internet.)

The social order and complex social functioning of contemporary society of the 21st century depends upon these technical systems of communication as much as they depend upon the patterns of the built environments.

One of the great challenges of 21st century contemporary architecture is the fundamental restructuring away from the “Fordist” concept of repetitive blocks of the industrial mass society (large, square factories containing long assembly lines of similar workstations of staff each repeating the same task hour by hour, and the square repetitive blocks of traditional homes, offices and skyscrapers of the 20th Century), towards a “post-Fordist” society of flexible specialization, with its new order of diversity of work and life processes and a new level of fluidity and dynamism in careers, institutions and corporate organizations.

Over the past three decades, Zaha Hadid Architects have developed new language of architecture that allows a whole new set of organizing patterns for contemporary society. There are striking correspondences between this new architectural language and the progressive development of contemporary advanced societies.

The more complex lives we lead in the 21st century overlap and integrate rather than separate the life aspects of work, education, entertainment and habitation. The modern principle of functional zoning in regular grids has been superseded by agendas of layering in mixed-use developments. The architecture of repetition that marks out the 20th Century has been superseded by buildings that are adaptable, as well as encourage, this diversity. The traditional architecture of crisp platonic blocks and crystalline grids is antithetical to these new demands for variation and intensive integration of contemporary life patterns. Consistent orthogonal buildings can no longer meet the users demand. Instead, the oblique and the curvilinear become prevalent to allow for the gradual seamless morphing from one condition to another. To match the flexibility of the lives we now lead (transcontinental travel, wireless internet access anywhere, flexible working hours etc...), 21st century buildings are structured by means of continuous fluid transformations and smooth transitions - rather than by the abruptly segmented zones of cities that contain the traditional orthogonal buildings. Instead of a few distinct types of buildings found in the 20th Century (schools that looked like all other schools, offices that looked like all other

role as a bridge of understanding attracted to a simplistic and therefore more commercial vision.²⁵

Second, as described by Sennett, our discipline may have vehemently asserted its superior position, its separation from the rest through an acquired knowledge and, through its work, a confirmation of certain rhetoric of submission.

The chain of reasoning is obvious: not content to be recognized as elite and wield power, the architects have also given form to their symbols. Of course, in a society that seeks to be democratic, that impregnation cannot be more contentious, especially when those symbols search for –either by obligation or by a genuine belief– significant new bodies. This vision is obviously strongly anchored in reality –is one of the reiterated arguments used by the general media– has degenerated into a reactionary attitude towards any architecture expressing uniqueness and desire to escape norms. To the point of misreading proposals that are innovative in their morphology, tectonic or concept, mistaking them for frivolous setups inspired by marketing approaches and devoid of any interest.

The idea of objectivity, is of course, completely contradictory to the very essence of architecture. If this were no more than the mere result of applying formulas (good-bad, effective-useless, true-misguided, etc), what would be the sense of the architect's existence (or of any job, really)? As for virtuosity or claims of superiority it's very difficult for a profession to establish a link with others relying upon the inextricable of its skills. An unprofitable enigma and one that assigns false powers: *people*, the lay public, will never understand what architecture can do for them if they are unaware of the processes. And this lack of connection, of course, will become a lack of affection.

25. Alejandro Zaera-Polo has addressed this problem in his text *Mediators*, compiled in *The Sniper's Log* (Barcelona, Actar, 2012, originally published in *Hunch*, no. 10, Rotterdam, 2006), addresses the loss of a collective with an identifiable and understandable voice for the general public, which requires the appearance of title's mediators: «Mediators are, as a result, the missing link between an ever-growing, architecture-consuming public, the commissioning clientele and the architects' generally hermetic collective. Mediators are often architects themselves, but they have developed specialized listening skills; their antennae enable them to interpret what individuals, organizations, or entire populations need or think they need, and to translate those needs into guidelines for architects. They often perform as matchmakers between a particular client or problem and a particular architect, suitable to servicing the client's desire.» p. 453.

26. Louis H. Sullivan, *Autobiography of an Idea*, Press of the American Institute of Architects, Incorporated, 1924, p. 196.

27. *Op. cit.*, p. 207.

2b / Expiration

One day in November Frank Furness said: “Sullivan, I'm sorry, the jig is up. There'll be no more building. The office now is running dry. You've done well, mighty well. I like you. I wish you might stay. But as you were the last to come it is only just you should be first to go.”²⁶

Louis H. SULLIVAN
Autobiography of an idea

Louis H. Sullivan tells of his dismissal from the Frank Furness studio, in Philadelphia, after the 1873 credit crisis. This cruel tale, would be repeated again with Sullivan, and he would have done the same to his most famous disciple, Frank Lloyd Wright, had he not starred in one of those very un-American second acts. Sullivan is not too benevolent with himself in his autobiography: «I lived in crass ignorance. I thrived and, therefore, the world was fair».²⁷

The refrain is familiar: «all is over, our time is spent». It is not the first time an architect thinks in those terms. Walter Benjamin describes in detail in his book *Passages* at a time

offices, museums that looked like all other museums etc.), the 21st century will have a rich spectra of variation of building forms for all building types.

Francisco Leiva < Grupo Aranea

Independence.

Víctor López-Cotelo

Not forget that it serves the human being.

Stan Allen

The greatest challenge we face is our own irrelevance. Architects are responsible for only a very small amount of what gets built today, and moreover, have been excluded from the big stuff: we no longer build infrastructure or give form to cities. In the developing world architects have been outpaced; cities are built in spite of architects. In the developed west, architects have been unwilling, or unable to confront the real issues of shrinking cities, the need to rebuild infrastructure, restore the existing building stock, re-imagine houses and cities. Practice itself need to be re-invented. It's not so much what we do as how we do it that needs to change, or we will face increasing marginalization.

Antón García-Abril

Architects must unite art and technology and transfer this knowledge to society.

Luis Fernández-Galiano

In our schools, where the architect receives a polytechnic training –so that they may be considered a construction engineer at the same time as having a humanistic dimension–, we should encourage the study economics and law, essential to know the contemporary world and intervene in it. Architects appreciate history or art, while deems those other disciplines expendable, and in many schools they are subjects considered 'sissy', to which students pay little attention.

Marcos Cruz

There are several important aspects to consider here. On the one hand, architects today need to catch up with advances in technology that go beyond traditional construction methods. The exploration of new materials, sophisticated robotic fabrication processes, and bio-technological intelligence are just three areas that will certainly challenge us in the next few years. On the other hand, there are sociological as well as economic complexities that need to be reconsidered much more seriously by architects. We need to move away from two decades of exuberant public building projects, museums and music halls that were in many cases built in a very wasteful manner, to concentrate more on basic, sustainable and community-lead projects. Architects need to enquire much more the current society and its needs, along with reconsidering the contemporary body (which many architects have simply taken for granted). This is on both aesthetic and psychological levels.

when he passed from being a recognized professional to an ambiguous position, displaced largely by the technological revolution of the nineteenth century that left his social position *in Albis*. Or put another way: after being left behind by technical advances (and his lack of reaction), the architect became a passive subject.

The architectural theorist Bötticher expressed the general conviction when he said that «with regard to the art forms of the new system, the formal principle of the Hellenic mode» must come into force. Empire was the style of revolutionary terrorism, for which the State was an end in itself. Just as Napoleon little realized the functional nature of the State as instrument of the rule of the bourgeois class, so the master-builders of his time equally little realized the functional nature of iron, with which the constructional principle entered upon its rule in architecture. These master-builders fashioned supports in the style of the Pompeian column, factories in the style of dwelling houses, just as later the first railway stations were modelled on chalets. «Construction occupies the role of the sub-conscious». Nevertheless, the concept of the engineer, which came originally from the Revolutionary Wars, began to gain ground, and the struggles between builder and decorator, Ecole Polytechnique and Ecole des Beaux Arts, began.²⁸

Despite Benjamin's words, one may not well understand the jump that this professional and technical double break meant. That Napoleonic order gave us our systems of weights and measures, also regulated architectural work and associated it with the fine arts world, while clarifying a seemingly more objective discipline: engineering. Iron was but the material that deepened the division. While the architects were trying to find an appropriate language to use, the need for rail infrastructure propelled the work of engineers. Architecture, in reaction, established a teaching system and strengthened its moral purpose; a classic cyclical historiography, from Philibert de L'Orme's *good and evil architect* in the sixteenth century: «so things should be, we must not lose our way». It is no coincidence that this century would produce a Gothic *revival* or incorporate new historical references (such as Egyptian architecture). Nor do John Ruskin's archaic approaches appear out of nowhere, the first restoration theories or the first specific treatises on homes (*The Architecture of Country Houses*, ran by Andrew Jackson Downing). Such instability responds to both the technical substrate loss and narrowing of social space, now shared. Some understood that break as a warning, reversible if good intentions returned to guide the discipline. Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc's arguments, such a supporter of the union of engineers and architects,²⁹ follow those lines:

28. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (edited by Rolf Tiedemann), Princeton University Press. 2009. Quote taken from the summaries *Paris, Capital of the 19th Century*, p. 38. (We owe the discovery of this quote to Stan Allen, included in the *New Natures. Intermodal Station in Logroño*. Ábalos+Sentkiewicz, book in which we are now working).

29. Viollet-le-Duc, *Discourses on Architecture*, Volume II, «Twentieth Conversation» (translation, Pla Maurici), p. 428: «[...] it is better to say that to form an architect it is best to choose what one formerly called an *honest man*, and we can say that this quality is allied, nine out of ten times, with real talent, with knowledge and experience».

[Engineers], subjected to very limited studies in architecture, employ iron only with a view to practical use without worrying about art forms. And we, architects, could have come to their aid in the formal aspects, but have instead rejected as much as possible these new elements. When we have used them, we have done so reproducing the same practical methods discovered by builders and engineers but dissimulating them, I repeat, under certain forms consecrated by tradition. Hence the conclusion, not without reason, that architects were not smart enough, and that engineers were not artists. [...] If we look at things from a distance and without prejudice, we must recognize that architect and civil engineer studies

There is also a need to question architecture's relationship with nature in a more critical, yet also creative way. There are certainly many intelligent responses to our environmental problems that can be found in nature rather than invented from scratch. A great challenge, however, remains on how architects need to reach out from their studio environment to interact with our society in a much more pro-active and public way. In times of crisis, architects need to concentrate much more on communicating with the general public and to make it aware of the architect's quintessential role in building the future built environment. This is especially so in countries like the UK where the architect's profession is often seen with great mistrust.

José Luis Vallejo < Ecosistema Urbano

Urban problems are becoming more complex and reality is transforming at a mind-blowing pace.

The architect must be able to design from complexity while maintaining a multi-faceted outlook that allows the incorporation of new tools, partners, etc.

We understand the figure of the architect as an activator, mediator and curator of social processes in a networked reality in which citizens must go from being passive recipients or consumers to active producers or prosumers.

Jon Aguirre Such < Paisaje Transversal

Architecture and the architectural profession have to apply themselves to social issues. In this regard it is vital to understand the difference between construction and building. We cannot continue to plan new buildings in a country where it is estimated that there are six million empty houses and in which even the most remote village has its own convention centre. Architects cannot continue to work with bricks or concrete, they have a duty to help solve the problems that the profession has helped create over recent years. Regeneration, rehabilitation, rescheduling or reconfiguration of spaces should be some of the topics to cover. But not only from a tectonic aspect, but also from a process perspective, because space today cannot be considered a physical fact. And if architects create spaces for social autonomy, as we advocate, we have to think of these spaces not only in their physical dimension. It is also about starting to incorporate new technologies and new digital spaces for our work. And to think of new ways of doing architecture beyond the physical realm. We have a responsibility and also have the ability to do so, but for this we need to reinvent the profession, otherwise we run the risk that the work of the architect is unnecessary.

Wiel Arets

I believe that new ideas and new technology, and new thoughts, will all happen when we as architects believe in a positive future. We as humans believe in progress. There is a drive in our nature to create positive and new things, in my opinion. And that's part of my way of thinking. And resistance is also part of that, because nothing will ever progress smoothly. Only the positive attitudes of architects will ensure that architecture stays a discipline not operating at the margin of society.

tend to merge, as happened once. If a survival instinct has meant architects in recent times have tried to react to something they consider to be an interference of the engineer in their domain and have sought to reject these means, then that instinct is a disservice and will only serve, if it prevails, to reduce the day after day of the architect's role, reducing functions to those of an artist-decorator. If we reasoned, we'd realize that uniting would satisfy the interests of both because, at the heart of it, the name does not matter, the bottom line is the thing, and the thing is art.³⁰

Despite Viollet-le-Duc's exhortation, the figure of a not so necessary architect solidified, is no longer needed exactly in the same way. Vagnetti contextualizes the portrait and describes an established professional, majestic, dignified, whose direct action on the building is "concentrated in the period in which the work, after completion of its body, assumed its present form through the patient work of a coating",³¹ i.e. afterwards. As can be seen by following the discipline throughout the nineteenth century, the wound is very deep and still remains one hundred years later, despite attempts by the Modern Movement to objectify architecture by swearing -hand on the technical book- to thus achieve some harmony with the machine process. Traumatized by something so slippery as *progress*, it is a professional type that we still recognize, paradoxically persistent. An architect who not only inhabits the territory of legend and, somehow, remains apprehensive towards new technological changes or the disposition of new work forms (less hierarchical or patriarchal). Obsolescence is one of the dangers facing any profession, and panic one of the most repeated resulting neurosis. We may not wish to recognize it as such, but as an assertion of the architect's role in our society, we need to reveal the implicit subtext.

2c / Transformation

Modern social conditions have allowed the type of «artist-craftsman» (Kunsthändler) to disappear completely and have made a machine out of every worker [...]. Thus from two directions ever more demands are placed on the modern architect, since he is also forced to dedicate all of his efforts and energy to his more specialized profession.³²

Otto WAGNER
The architecture of our time

Straddling the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Otto Wagner publishes *Moderne Architektur*. In the final lines of the first chapter, entitled unequivocally «The Architect», the above quote is to be found. This is a text, which functions as a small instruction manual (barely more than a hundred pages) with the most diverse considerations, from criticism to composition and construction. Falling back on Wagner may seem nostalgic, but it is a viable model: like other architects of the turn of the century who also shared their experiences –Louis H. Sullivan in *Autobiography of an idea*–, lived an end of an era

30. See «Twelfth Conversation» *op. cit.*, p. 73-74.

31. *Op. cit.*, p. 528.

32. *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

Iván López Munuera

The most urgent need of architecture is the same as for the rest of society: to accommodate and give voice to marginalized realities beside the hegemonic discourses, incorporate inclusive studies like gender theory or postcolonial discourses, be affected by sensitivities that are not always taken into account (from so-called vernacular architecture to interior design, transient examples or technologies that make things possible).

Architecture must escape a single definition, escape from the classifying project that draws limits to something sterile, dead. It should not be afraid of discussion; it cannot be prescriptive (say how things should be) but must be adjusted to the multiple realities that exist in contemporary times. In fact, architecture should be a toolbox that allows retroactively reading and reassigning of past events from current viewpoints.

Ángela García de Paredes e Ignacio Pedrosa

Like almost all in times of crisis architecture also needs to change, to re-invent itself, to return to being the architecture that finds surprise in the emotion and not just excess, as recently appears to have occurred. Only the rapid acceptance of the new economic and social reality in which we find ourselves, putting aside any hint of longing for privileged positions, can allow architecture to recover validity in society, and so recover the reference position for intellectual prestige.

Eduardo Arroyo

The honesty and critical courage of their creators.

Peter Wilson

The fact that architecture is not a luxury but a necessity needs to be reestablished on political and social agendas as well as in the popular subconscience.

How to demonstrate and propagate this affirmative role, not by further pursuing ludic trajectories, but by demonstrating that kids need kindergartens, cities their public forums and cultural groups their objects of identification.

Emilio Tuñón

Architecture should be sensitive to changes in society. This requires, more than ever, an approximation of architecture to real life, and therefore to the actual users.

Iñaki Ábalos

The quality of high-density urban space. What can the present city give in exchange for renouncing the Nollí Plan and that manner of building public space that has fascinated us all but no longer exists.

Juan Herreros

Extending the project concept and practice to a host of activities that are just to design and construct buildings.

and could glimpse the world to come, but failed to swim ashore to modernity. In 1914, when his book was last re edited, Europe was heading in to the First World War, and Wagner swelled the ranks of a past which no one new how to handle –as always with recent awkward memory. Jean-François Lyotard attributed to the generation that succeeded him (Karl Kraus, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Adolf Loos, Robert Musil...) the end of the great narratives³³ that postmodernism cannot assume.

A century has passed, and the situation continues familiar. Wagner announced precisely the pan-cultural vision that is intended here, and socially interprets the architect's role from the inclusiveness of their knowledge: multiple knowledge in a single professional. In any case, it reflects an extensive tradition already indicated by Vitruvius in his first chapter of *De architectura*, in which he recommends the architect to be someone «educated, skilled in drawing, competent in geometry, attentive reader of philosophers, expert in the art of music, documented in medicine, illustrated in case law and expert in astrology and cosmos' movements».³⁴ In the Renaissance, Alberti lowered this aspiration to focus on seemingly more modest goals: he only considered essential a training in painting and maths, skills that could boost unusual options. Michelangelo, for example, relates Vasari, collaborated in the fortification of the 1530 Florence siege ³⁵ –an example of holistic wisdom the Romans would have loved, his treaty concluding with military machines. This model is transferred in a thread of uninterrupted continuity, to the Secession decorative motifs, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret MacDonald's interior designs, the Bauhaus training workshops, Aalto's furniture, the Eames' complete work –we often forget that Charles was an architect–, Renzo Piano's disseminator facet at the RAI (Radiotelevisione Italiana)...

However, there is an important nuance: in all of previously named cases we speak of architects who have the ability to function in areas that are completely unrelated to them, but in no case do they usurp space. They study *from* their position in order to act as observers. So even when someone like Bernard Tschumi officially started his career in 1974 by organizing a fireworks display at the Architectural Association in London, –and still boasts of it– he is not expressing himself as pyrotechnic, but as an architect who dissects an economic process through the transformation of matter.

This solution is not valid for all cases: we cannot expect everyone to understand this diversion as a panacea, nor abandon a way of practising architecture installed in the very DNA of the profession itself. Nor should this recycling invade other professional's powers, whose own space also responds to their training's specifics and identity. To propose the complete displacing of a sector as a viable solution is, if you give it a minute's thought, a sentimental aporia, an unattainable pretence of colossal scale, seated in the transposing of personal illusions (of a part of the collective) to the whole of society (in its global context). It does not seem possible to solve the problem from this generalist approach, although it is an avenue to explore in the processes of education and intensive training, where an opening may be valuable in order to raise expectations for the future incorporation of the architect to the labour market; from the educational point of view, this responsibility must be urgently addressed.

That ability to cover really different fields with respect to a static model imposed in the present is therefore repeated over time and requires an understanding of architecture somewhat less rigid, more extensive and cumulative. This, of course, would be a qualitative

33. Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* Les éditions de Minuit, Paris, 1978.

34. *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

35. «While Michelangelo dealt with these works with immense love and care, the impediment of the siege of Florence in 1530 occurred, which was the occasion for little or nothing being done, having put responsible citizens in charge of the country's fortification. So, he lent a thousand crowns to the Republic and forming part of the Militia's Nine, a position appointed for war issues, he devoted all his thoughts and efforts to fortify the San Miniato hill. He ensured bastions were built, ones that otherwise would have been done differently if they were to be there forever. It is true that, the narrowing of the siege with the passage of days, for his own security, he finally resolved to leave Florence for Venice.» *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

PKMN (pacman)

The architect must look for architectural necessities embedded in other fields; and not so much to open up the profession to “others” but to mix with them, and not from privileged positions of “hosting” as has been done to date, quite the opposite, to search for these places of opportunity. It is clear that moving from host to “guest” is a complex and even uncomfortable process; but this change is urgent in order not to become the “host with no guests”, the boss of all this with nothing to do and no one to manage.

Paco Burgos & Ginés Garrido

Nothing too different to what has made architecture something relevant in the past: creativity, solvency and flexibility. We must be able to provide our own view, a solid knowledge of our discipline and a clear disposition to understand and address the needs of those who need us.

Manuel Ocaña

That requirement is to be focused in education.

The curricula of architecture courses are based on questions that are outdated and anachronistic. Guardians of the Swamp with armored bureaucratic suits and secured positions that keep worshipping and spreading inoperative doctrines in reeking mothball fumes. Illustrated builders are created or graphical megalomaniacs with corny portfolios, overdrawn and rhetorical. Nature visitor’s centers, chapels in academic havens, sculpture museums on beaches, hybrid buildings of umpteen thousand square meters, or military and cowardly training in factories of public housing, among others, are just some of the questions that the students have to solve with sacred repertoires that do not empathize with society.

The first requirement is the academic questioning all “The Masters”.

The second is to de-stigmatize traditional languages, ornament, specialization, non-material or spatial projects and the relationship of architectural thought with the global market.

The third, and most important, is to unpretentiously promote issues related to creativity, quality and relevance to education, innovation and transformation, and to consider human resources as a supreme good.

Sou Fujimoto

Anticipation for something beyond there.

In our time, I cannot help but say that the standing position of the architecture has become very complex. On earth, various social situations exist in parallel and it has become normal that a certain architectural proposal does not have any reality elsewhere. Still, in all ages, I suppose the architecture enables people to foresee something beyond there. A proposal of one house must be able to foretell a life slightly more enjoyable than before. A proposal of a new public facility must be able to foretell the nature of the near-future society, in which everyone should live with a little more fun. I believe it is the humble role of the architecture to continue giving such proposals with dreams which "enables people to foresee something beyond there". I think asking

change versus usual protectionism derived from corporate understanding of the occupation. For better or worse, to open the discipline involves giving body to the *education* of responsible professionals seeking to be useful in the market without abandoning the essence. The transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, transversal and the resulting synonyms –curiously *versatility* is rarely used, a word we personally prefer– are becoming a pest in the professional lexicon, and their reiteration reveals an anxious nature; but they do not cease to give a simple answer to a complex problem, with too many sharp edges. When the term is extended, it threatens to become a placebo, replacing even the need for a remedy that architecture was not really looking for, as if it had magically lost its possible powers.

In Wagner's Vienna, more than half a century later, a young Hans Hollein anticipates the 1968 revolt by a few months from the pages of the magazine *Bau* with his little manifesto «Architektur ist Alle» (All is architecture). How not to understand architecture as the war pilot's helmet, asks Hollein. Are phone booths not perhaps architecture –mobiles for us–? Amidst images of tension structures, art installations and a portrait of Che Guevara, the Austrian architect called for less restriction, more expansion. The *micro manifesto* (just a couple of pages) ended:

Architects must stop thinking exclusively in terms of buildings only.

Built and physical architecture, freed from the technological limitations of the past, will more intensely work with spatial qualities as well as with psychological ones. The process of «erection» will get a new meaning, spaces will more consciously have haptic, optic, and acoustic properties, and contain informational effects while expressing emotional needs.

A true architecture of our time must redefine itself and expand its means. Many areas outside traditional building will enter the realm of architecture, just as architecture and «architects» will have to enter new fields.

All are architects. Everything is architecture.³⁶

Hollein's words, apart from echoing perfectly the *Zeitgeist*, advance events and give hope for a synthetic discipline. If the 1970's crisis deprived architects of their praxis, it also provided a rare opportunity to reflect its nature and charged the theoretical weaponry of subsequent decades. Perhaps the Hollein text should be read in an even more radical sense, at a time when realities and spaces have multiplied. The material appears to be in process of dissolution. The «things», the physical product, are going through a crisis so far unseen; and the physical side of architecture cannot ignore it. And so two paths, already explored through the ideas of autonomy and heteronomy in architecture, are reopened: the insistence in the discipline –more profound, deeper thinking thickening inward– and secondly, but not least, the diaspora of skills and an opening up to the outside. The pure (once again) against the bastard, the concentration and recovery of the craft against the dispersion and dissolution of skills. A polyphony so disconcerting as it is hopeful.

36. Hans Hollein, «Alle ist Architektur» *Bau* 1/2, 1968, p. 2.

for "something beyond there" is simply the essence of the human beings. In any social system or in any economic situation, aren't we all living wondering "what is beyond there"? It would be splendid if we could create such hopeful anticipation. By variety of architects each proposing variety of different anticipation, I believe such diversity itself will enrich the world.

Why is it still worth being an architect?

Antón García-Abril

It is exciting.

Patrik Schumacher

Human civilization has always relied on architectural structures and their arrangement into towns/cities to build up and stabilize a social order. Cities have been building up ever more complex infrastructure and developments, and superimposing layer upon layer, as well as growing ever larger. Only this way, was it possible to structure a society with sufficiently complex and robust life processes and institutions.

Marcos Cruz

Without doubt, architecture is one of the oldest and most fascinating professions. It is in the crossing point between many fields of expertise and therefore greatly inclusive. More than anything, it is a prime spatial and social art. With the unprecedented growth of the world's population, and more and more people living in urban environments, architecture is more than ever a needed discipline. In fact, it is one of the key professions of the future. The key question is where, when and how to act.

José Luis Vallejo < Ecosistema Urbano

In the DNA of an architect we find constant motivation to innovate with processes and outcomes (design thinking). This central feature, along with the ability to be an active part in the creation and management of complex processes involving multiple teams with disparate views and interests, are fantastic skills to meet the challenges of our contemporary society.

Jon Aguirre Such < Paisaje Transversal

Right now, considering how the teaching of architecture is posed and how architecture is understood today, it is not worth being an architect.

Friendly fire

Will there even be architects in thirty years? This is a question that no other generation has ever had to consider. The falsely assured still maintain that, economically, buildings simply are quite like food —irreducible facts of life that no transformation of social or market forces can ever change. They may well be wrong. Despite the customary, fashionable genuflection toward infrastructural questions and concerns today, little attention is being paid to the more radical, more disturbing reality: that infrastructural demands are not only becoming exponentially more importunate today but that these infrastructural demands *are breeding and mutating in kind and not only degree*. We have no choice today but to deal with the new «soft» infrastructure: knowledge infrastructure, program infrastructure, cultural infrastructure, virtual infrastructure. The demand for design –and de-design– in our over-engineered, over-mediated world is both enormous and pervasive, yet the majority of architects still respond to it with the medieval language of the stoic, autonomous building. Today’s design world is stratified, with an emerging class structure, it’s associated embedded conflicts, and an emerging new proletariat increasingly separated from the principal means of production. Architects smile from behind their bow ties, for they have not yet seen that this new proletariat is themselves. And yet, surely they must know.³⁷

Sanford KWINTER
Mach I (and Other Mystic Visitations)

The conclusion reveals no axioms. The answers to those questions with which we opened the text, we are sorry to say, are not Manichean. For sure, this will not be the last time we consider this matter (in the end, instigations have that effect), and what is here stated has, in fact, generated more doubts than certainties. We can only argue in our defence that we never promised anything else.

Melancholy offers the delight, as tempting as unwise, to conjure up the past again. The architect (like the architecture critic) may be considered a perfect analyst of himself *a posteriori*. Warnings like Kwinter’s –published in *Any* in 1997– often fall on deaf ears. The alarm signals –as were, for example, Jane Jacobs’ writings, so outmoded for decades for being a *stranger* in an architectural world– have been received, except for the occasional awakened spirit, with an innocuous smile reserved for the naive. However, putting aside the more or less deserved criticisms, architects must do something *well* if they can boast of long-standing survival –Hammurabi Code onwards–, something to do with the constant criticism as an alert mechanism. Reyner Banham’s posthumous text «A Black Box. The Secret Profession of Architecture»³⁸ provides a summary of some of these aspects. Banham urged to «look again at ‘this thing called architecture’ in its own right, as one of a number of thinkable modes of design which, for some reason, has come to occupy a position of cultural privilege in relation to the construction industry».[39] The British critic explains, at least in part, the reason for this privileged position, which is what makes the architect unique in the chain of the design process: his willingness to take the responsibility and capacity to choose. Those alert mechanisms we mentioned before encourage a specific accuracy: there is no such thing as *the* solution to a problem; there is *this* valid solution: specific, concrete and unique.

37, Sanford Kwinter, *Mach I (and Other Mystic Visitations)*, compiled in *Far from Equilibrium. Essays on Technology and Design Culture*, Barcelona, Actar, 2007, p. 37-38.

38. Reyner Banham, *A Black Box. The Secret Profession of Architecture*. Originally published in *New Statesman and Society* October 12th, 1990 p. 22-25, for the present text we have used the version reproduced in *A Critic Writes. Essays by Reyner Banham*. University of California Press, London, 1996.

PKMN (pac-man)

It may be a romantic feeling as we face inevitable extinction, but we see “architectural challenges” everywhere. While the building industry itself, through its own codes, often completely disciplinary and absurd, has evolved largely in relation to the architectural object, however, it has spurned strategies, tools and processes that relate it to the citizen, the public space, the city... This may be the challenge and reason to dedicate your life to being “an architect”, which is not the same as “giving” your life to architecture, that religious position so akin to the Catholic-Christian suffering.

Víctor López-Cotelo

For the same as ever, because its essence has not changed.

Luis Fernández-Galiano

Rather than ask if it is worth being an architect, we would have to question who should be one. Antonio Cánovas (*Translator’s note: a nineteenth century Spanish politician*) said it is a Spaniard who cannot be anything else, and perhaps we should extend his irony to our profession, by saying it is an architect who cannot be anything else. Beyond the derision, I am convinced that only those who cannot help it should start in architecture. It is not a lucrative or glamorous profession, and requires tenacity, dedication and an immoderate effort. However, it provides an extraordinarily fertile approach to the world, and those of us who are architects cannot but make the world ours with the greedy eyes of an architect. As Le Corbusier said in his will, “this profession requires endless work, perseverance and patience; we are donkeys turning the wheel, but donkeys who can see!”.

Stan Allen

You might think from my first answer that I am pessimistic. And I am aware that I am claiming irrelevance in the face of unprecedented public interest in architecture, and the commercial idea of design as “added value.” But this is less interesting to me; it’s just another, more subtle form of marginalization. It’s still worthwhile being an architect because architecture has capacities that film, media, novels, engineering, ecology, politics or poetry don’t have. And it is only by constantly reminding our selves of architecture’s specific capacities to work in and on the world that we might reclaim a measure of relevance today for this awkward but beautiful discipline.

Emilio Tuñón

We can still be useful in this changing society.

Wiel Arets

The problem could be that humans are no longer able to follow the same aspects that we do now, in which we are able to know our own disciplines. And that’s, in my opinion, something we must consider when going forward. Having a dream, and allowing ourselves to focus on what new technologies can do for us, is a situation we must understand in order to turn our dreams into utopian realities.

Hannah Arendt describes the moment she set out to write *The Human Condition*, aware of the perplexity for man to first «see himself from outside», with the space photos of Earth that began to proliferate in the second half of the twentieth century. In some way, those early space explorations gave hope to man to escape from the planet's *prison*. This experience exactly reproduces the situation of architects and architecture. Society reflects an image that we need to observe, and the discipline, somehow, is transmuted from ecosystem to jail –that *black box* Banham also mentions in his text. From outside in and inside out, the profession has become an enigma. A concatenation of circumstances has swiftly turned the virtuous into a pariah.

The history of problems is also the history of solutions, and facing the traditional isolation or immobility, alterations are being detected in both professional structures and their exchange with the social environment. A centrifugal momentum that pushes the architect to the common. The establishment of partnerships and work teams are in a process of unstoppable change, from a focal model to initiatives' constellations. The normal standard we know (a professional organization with a group of variable subordinate-student-apprentices, supervised by one, two or three figures, whose role is public leadership) is more than three hundred years old,⁴⁰ and has undergone minor alterations. In recent decades, however, there has been a simultaneous concentration and atomization of very different scales: at a large scale, the stolid corporate giants have reduced the traditional workshop space; in the smaller, small cells have appeared organized through cooperation and self help models, possible associations, professional guerrillas. Perhaps somewhat attenuated, not so comparable to those «rock bands» that Michael Sorkin associated with the birth of these initiatives in the late 1960s, but still strongly countercultural.⁴¹

If the internal structure is changing, that disposition to movement also reflects the exterior relations, less static, more delicate. An example would be the rediscovery of the architect as a social agent, presented beneath the umbrella of community service. Told straight: when that calling extends to such diverse layers of a profession, from expert to student, it may assert a genuine interest that should help place the architect in a space where he can be aware of his own utility. This is a legitimate aspiration: to claim his own validity in the contemporary context.

Let's insist, let's again confuse the architect with architecture. If the obsession has always been to find the style/way of life adequate to the time, how to transform the current praxis, precisely, into something suitable for us? Why it's worth, *right now*, to be an architect?

So far we have talked and focused on this third person, the «architect», but we cannot conceal what we are. We believe it would be appropriate to change now to «us», and answer the same question we have made to others. Let's forget here the legal and put the subjective first: it is not worth only acquiring skills –after all, that's a mere pact and therefore fickle– but capabilities. It is necessary to change the idea of the architect as the axis, for one of a less defined nature. Instead of the traditional monolithic discipline, we propose a bubblier element in perpetual motion. Questions arise, of course: that the architect is willing to adapt and be contaminated has already been said, but to equally accept a situation of reciprocity? Second, does this plan not have a «take it or leave it» typical of industrial restructuring? The first depends on a personal attitude and,

39. *Op. cit.*, p. 294.

40. Vagnetti, again, in chapter *Accademie e secoli barocchi: ... divennero luoghi appartati più silenziosi di prima, articolati in vari ambienti di lavoro per il titolare che poteva ricevervi la clientela e per i collaboratori, spesso molto numerosi, ma ormai solo impiegati dipendenti e non più affettuosi allievi o apprendisti. L'unità spirituale che aveva caratterizzato l'atmosfera umana della Bottega artistica si avviò a sparire, a transmutarsi in un rapporto più burocratico, più attento alle scadenze ed alla produttività, per l'esigenza stessa di sopperire a numerose commesse contemporaneamente. [...]* Became isolated and quieter places than before, divided into various work environments for the Master to receive clients and for collaborators, often very numerous, but now only hired employees rather than engaged students or apprentices. The spiritual unity that had characterized the human atmosphere of the workshop began to disappear, to become something rather more bureaucratic, more attentive to deadlines and productivity by the very need to tackle many projects at the same time]. *Op. cit.*, p. 385.

41. So Michael Sorkin tells in his 2004 article «Sex, Drugs, Rock and Roll, Cars, Dolphins and Architecture», dedicated to Ant Farm and included in the anthology *All Over the Map*. London, Verse, 2013.

Ángela García de Paredes e Ignacio Pedrosa

Architecture has always been a necessary activity for society, through which it expresses itself and at the same time it reflects upon; therefore, we believe that it is worth it, and very much so, to be an architect. Now, this craft returns to a more discreet presence in society, a position from which it has so often been an exemplary activity. Much remains to be done in our cities, which have experienced a dizzying transformation in infrastructure and facilities, but whose centers have in many cases become obsolete or outdated, hence they need to change and renew in order to be inhabited again. Be useful to people in their needs, from the most basic accommodation to those more complex, designed to meet the highest aspirations, is an endless path that always deserves to be followed.

Peter Wilson

It is worth being an architect because from time to time one experiences those uplifting moments where one observes the objects of his own labor in action, in the process of enhancing the life quality of those who encounter them.

Francisco Leiva < Grupo Aranea

Just as a few years ago we lived with impotence a crazy situation that some of us did not share and that we did not fail to criticize and fight, we must now seize this time of uncertainty for generating an intense debate so as to prevent society from repeating the same mistakes.

The architect still has the responsibility to build the scenarios of change.

Iñaki Ábalos

To build a new notion of beauty that allows an expansion of the limits of experience. In this we are like the first architect, thankfully.

Eduardo Arroyo

I would not recommend anyone to be an architect at this time. If in an advanced future society it becomes worth it, we will see.

Paco Burgos & Ginés Garrido

It will be worth in as long as we retain the ability to help improve the way of living for people. There is a huge amount of things to do in this regard and each is a good reason to make it worth being an architect.

The world is full of opportunities for architects. There are hundreds of millions of people living in conditions that we should not accept. We are very necessary. And in our country, despite the huge amount of work that has been done, the majority of a very low quality, we need to find a more cultured manner to build our country, our cities and our habitat.

therefore, is uncontrollable; the second answer is NO. The temptation of marginality is in addition to self-pitying, uninformed: architecture has exploited an extraordinary political and symbolic power.

There is some awareness, whilst writing this, that the discourse falls within that asexual space of the contemporary in sedition by ideology. But we are forced to assume it as part of our lives, a fact essential to form a cultural and social fabric appropriately dense. The proof of this is simple: it is very difficult to imagine our daily life in its absence. Our narrative is not possible in ellipsis. In less than twenty four hours, whilst these lines are finished (Madrid, February 2013), architecture reappears under diverse disguises: the people of Madrid make human chains around hospitals to protect, symbolically, the public health model; Israel responds to the Palestinian state declaration at the UN by building three thousand homes for settlers; in *Mad Men*'s seventh episode of the fifth season Don Draper's in-laws are disturbed by the protagonist's apartment, an open space clearly opposed to the suburban model of a *shingle house*; Pablo Gutierrez, the omniscient narrator in *Democracy*, explains the current economic crisis using the difference between buying houses and the buying of house *deeds*, while the protagonist illustrates estate agent prospects before going on the dole; in *Girls* (first season, episode three), Marnie tries to get to Diller, Scofidio & Renfro's High Line «High Line is cute,» she says. The architect figure as a guarantee of success in our fictions has not disappeared: in *The Ultimates*, the Avengers' *Triskelion* is *designed by Norman Foster*, says Nick Fury,⁴² and so on...

We cannot deny architecture.

Architecture is able to provide a way to see the world, to approach this not with a practitioner's servitude, but a rare empathy reserved for the critical object. Somehow, *almost* nothing is beyond its scope –that *almost* also fascinates us. We assume that an open, versatile and focused training to investigate the sinking of the world is part of our responsibilities as architects. That, as we do not imagine a world without architecture, architecture is not possible without a world. A belief that departs from the obsession to consider that *all* is related to everything when one is immersed in a topic. A conviction arising from the empathic bond that has to do with the look of things, fascinated in its function, its structure logic and the reason of their domestic laws.

It would be a very unproductive artifice to abandon architecture in the shaping of our lives. No, under no circumstances has it depreciated; rather it is our perception of what we want as architecture that has changed. All things considered, it is not even worth talking about «wanting», because architecture offers something more than that: use the verb to «wish» and also - as we have seen before - «decide». Although the knowledge structure has significantly altered –who is not an expert *in everything* these days?–, we cannot ignore the fact that architecture education, common to an entire generation, has led to the ecosystem that feeds these hopes of diversification. From amongst us (colleagues, friends, acquaintances), heterogeneous profiles stand out, perhaps exceptions, but in sufficient numbers to be considered as more than a mere hint of dilettantism that challenges the professional monoculture. It is possible that this «nature in crisis» we were talking about is, in fact, a powerful weapon indeed; that the problems are not such, they are symptoms. Of a freer profession, freer than it may

42. Mark Millar, Bryan Hitch, Andrew Currie. *The Ultimates 2*, Planeta de Agostini, Barcelona, 2003.

Juan Herreros

What kind of question is this? I do not have a bad conscience whereby it seems we have to conquer a lost legitimacy, or something similar.

Sou Fujimoto

I consider that any occupation is an act of taking over the history of mankind and leading it into the future. I myself had encountered the architecture by chance, was fascinated with architecture and am participating in the history of mankind as an architect now only because I was meant to be one. If there should be something different being an architect than other occupations, intentionally or not, architects create the whole living spaces for human beings, in other words, the environment that surrounds us, which I realize has a great responsibility.

Manuel Ocaña

No punishment is worth it. It is about vital options, of love and of a conscious desire to take risks. The profession is worthwhile.

seem. And that, beyond architecture, expecting its return –with new *forms* and reinvigorated strength– the acquired skills will breach the passage.

And while it is true that the reactivation of these capabilities –as we have seen not new, but lost– we can guess will be hard, as in any *relearning*, defeatism is as ominous as expendable. And this is not an ominous text at all. We are delighted to guess that we architects inevitably begin our second life.

We had ours. Maybe it's now the turn of our ideas.

Inma E. Maluenda / Enrique Encabo