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## How Become an Architect?

Richard J. Neutra

I have seen many wonderful educators scattered through architectural schools around the globe, splendid human beings in a struggle with complex resistance. Together with their students, they know, they cannot but must remain removed from the real study object, the flesh and blood client. Later in actual life he will loom. He will trust and suddenly withdraw trust.

If any client develops doubts, a crack in his initial confidence, and gets again and again into the worry about these coming thirty years of his buildings which spell his future, such worry can never be laughed off as foolish. The student early must be made to warm-heartedly feel with him. Such anxiety and 'depressive' mood is rather more justified than a prospect's primary optimism and 'manic' good spirit.

The young architect must learn to see with his own penetrating eyes a real, anxious, often childlike 'counsel seeker', who hopefully, very innocently approaches him, and in moments of exuberance, even cockily claims he 'knows what he wants'. Later he will collapse again into a lay person's helplessness. Let us admit from the start he is entitled by human nature to his erratic inconsistency. He who learns faces still other persons who are not fully in balance—not just the client.

An 'apprentice' with me and my men, contrary to a 'student' in a school, probably never receives a theoretical assignment and a self-assured or downright authoritarian teaching talk. His elder is more seen by him than heard. I am seen on closest range in my own jittery strife, and in the often anxious activity of an older, much more experienced and therefore much more worried-in-detail fellow worker. This is a fascinating mode of transferring 'a productive nervous and endocrine pattern', from the one who started years earlier to the one who is to get under way now.

Right or wrong, the old-fashioned teacher at least was too often looked at as pontificating; a 'talking book',

which has it all statically between its benign, or formidable, covers. The 'master' of the shop is surely a dynamically emotionally, troublesomely engaged man with job responsibility. The apprentice learns from this reality the anxieties of the master, from step to step how to overcome difficulties, do his own necessary research, and invest the effort to co-ordinate experts and get a team into swing. Nothing is here theoretical. The apprentice learns from *sharing* with an admired doer man's nervous processes which never can occur in a classroom quite in this fashion.

This process is not a new invention, but a practice of the last 10,000 years, unfortunately too much discarded for the formal school, itself a fairly new, still incompletely developed, and casually endowed invention. I say this looking at our country, in spite of the billions spent on it officially here in America, and in spite of the occasional wonderful people caught in the system.

The schoolmaster is a real master of a different kind, not like you and me in the class—good boys as we may be! The master of a trade in action is a human being visibly suffering and sometimes or often triumphing, technically and economically, under a specific pressure which we boys want to learn to master, ourselves. He is the 'example'. Often you don't want too much to become a teacher or imitate him or his career. You commiserate with him, and his trouble with the students, in a very different way.

The difficulty in 'learning' from a schoolteacher and the success in learning from a trade or craftmaster is explained, when we understand that what we learn in the second case, but not so well in the first, are nervous processes, acquiring an organic pattern of behavior all around, which we watch in the practitioner in his long trained and still ever problematic and demanding action of grappling with his task. We learn his 'sets' of fused activation, as the experimental psychologist says.

The apprentice by participating and sharing does

never quite get into the inferiority feelings and remoteness of a student who with awe or with very unjustified resentment might listen to what to him seem 'lectures' of the teacher (who has been granted the title *magister* and disciplinarian these long centuries!). The apprentice like 'the sorcerer's apprentice', on the contrary, may over-optimistically soon think he knows it all, and get out of hand, but as a whole, his optimism propels better than inferiority feelings. It is a doubtful state of our civilization which has given up the apprenticeship system, perhaps for an overcredulous overindulgence in schools. Fortunately, the schools get better, I believe, every year generally speaking, and the sup-

plementation by apprenticeship has found some favor.

I have lectured, but I am never safely convinced that anyone ever got anything out of it. Young men who saw me suffer at my daily work, not merely lecture, learned most.

The pressing and unavoidable mass transaction in training may be the cause of all this mischievous abandonment of a long proven practice. We must train myriads, and still huge sectors of mankind—from the deep South to the far North, from the far East to the farthest West—remain remarkably unserved.

### **Toward a Broader Liberal Arts Base**

*Anthony Ellner, Jr.*  
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Any college bulletin is filled with course descriptions which, from the viewpoint of tangible and specific use, relate somehow, somewhere, to architecture. Indeed, the traditional dilemma of the five-year curriculum has been to select, from this wealth of material, those courses which have the greatest and most immediate value for the trainee. For instance, we would agree that our students should learn to read, write, and speak effectively, and that courses in English are beneficial in this respect. Nevertheless, this would be a nearsighted and overtechnical viewpoint, and would in no way distinguish English from other service courses which have similar specific uses and an equal claim upon the curriculum.

A broader liberal arts base can produce a stronger general background, and must be justified from this viewpoint alone. We must bring to our students our maximum understanding of architecture, which may be conceived of as a comprehensive, physical manifestation of human thought and action. If we would agree that full and proper understanding of architecture requires some such context, then the extent to which the context is sacrificed is doubtless the extent to which we are developing technicians.

To describe briefly the chain reaction implicit in this

viewpoint, an optimum understanding of architecture will require, among other things, an optimum understanding of architectural history and architectural theory or philosophy. These we can control, and to varying degree synthesize into our central lab work. *But* an optimum understanding of architectural history is not possible without a firm background in the general history of western civilization, and an optimum understanding of theory (of utmost importance if we are to discriminate among the conflicting forces which always accompany the arts) would achieve greater success against a richer background of philosophy and literature.

The word 'optimum' is used, since the exact extent would vary with available time and location or character of the school. But lest we assume that we have already achieved the optimum, let us take a good look at the profession as it is practiced, admitting that we had a hand in making it as it is. Does it demonstrate a clear grasp of the real nature of architecture? Does it display conviction, resilience, control?

My first reason, therefore, in favoring a broader liberal arts base is as a means of improving existing shortcomings in architectural education.

Meanwhile the stretch-out in secondary school education, and the consequent lack of real college preparation