

ALISON AND PETER SMITHSON

*This short text was the Smithsons' contribution to "Thoughts in Progress," a monthly discussion forum in Architectural Design, the April 1957 issue of which was dedicated to New Brutalism. It contains one of the Smithsons' most famous comments about the movement—that it "tries to face up to a mass-production society, and drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work." Resisting the easy reduction of New Brutalism to techniques such as poured concrete, the Smithsons insist that their project is fundamentally ethical in nature.—A.K.*

If Academicism can be defined as yesterday's answers to today's problems, then obviously the objectives and aesthetic techniques of a real architecture (or a real art) must be in constant change. In the immediate postwar period it seemed important to show that architecture was still possible, and we determined to set against loose planning and form—abdication, a compact disciplined, architecture.

Simple objectives once achieved change the situation, and the techniques used to achieve them become useless.

So new objectives are established.

From individual buildings, disciplined on the whole by classical aesthetic techniques, we moved on to an examination of the *whole* problem of human associations and the relationship that building and community has to them. From this study has grown a completely new attitude and non-classical aesthetic.

Any discussion of Brutalism will miss the point if it does not take into account Brutalism's attempt to be objective about "reality"—the cultural objectives of society, its urges, and so on. Brutalism tries to face up to a mass-production society, and drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work.

Up to now Brutalism has been discussed stylistically, whereas its essence is ethical.

—*Architectural Design* 27 (April 1957), p. 113.