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For a people's meaning in architecture

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Rice University, 1992
For A People's Meaning in Architecture

by

E. Charles Price Jr.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Master of Architecture

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ABSTRACT

For a People's Meaning in Architecture

E. Charles Price Jr.

There are many signs of a lack of meaning or importance to people's lives today.

As shown by the fact that the vast majority of houses today are not designed by architects, the public no longer sees a worth in having their homes designed by architects.

To begin to deal with both these problems, the architectural community needs a way of looking at Architecture that is less inwardly focused.

Many current architects, by focusing on the architectural elite instead of on the user, have lost the ability to express meaning in a way beneficial to the public. To reinforce the feeling of worth in the individual and to imply a set of values that can be part of an idea about a way of living life, the architectural community needs to reorient itself away from philosophy and intellectual meaning and towards an understandable and believable meaning for the layman.
Acknowledgements

Richard Ingersoll whose herculean effort guided my ravings into a thesis.
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Preface

Many of the issues argued in this paper with regard to Architecture also can apply to the writing of a paper. The paper suggests that much of the architectural elite (particularly in schools) has become too focused on an intellectual side to Architecture that misses the desires or needs of the people. This can be attributed to aspects of the way school is taught and to which types of study receive praise or acceptance. The scholarly method in which debate or challenge determines Truth tends to drive one away from stances that can't be supported by fact. It is one of my premises, that these attitudes aren't advancing us toward Truth, but are creating a closure that will continually lead us to the same types of results. The use of certain languages, make some facts "true" that won't be true in another language. By using a language "of the school" in our studies, we come up with many impressions or tenets that don't hold as true when tested in the realm of the real human being. I have made a concious attempt to avoid using the school methodology to prevent the skewing of truth to which this can lead. This is not to suggest that my "truth" is any less skewed, but I thought that by being skewed in a different direction, it might have a value in reminding us of how far one can stray from the typical focus of our scholarly study while still remaining within the bounds of what might be considered to be True. It is a problem of the "school" method that it can lead one to forget the skewing that must always take place. By accepting the skewing that comes from my feelings and my attempts to know the feelings of
others, I am not coming closer to Truth, but am perhaps achieving a validity by
not presenting as true, ideas that can't be.

Some of my statements don't appear to be very professional or serious
as a writer - more subjective, less documented. I have chosen to take this
luxury as I write about the often illogical feelings of people. I am not out to
reeducate people or change people's feelings. I don't feel documentation and
proofs are the way to go here. My hope is that some of what I write will strike
a chord or "feel right" to you; if it doesn't, no amount of "proof" will help; if it
does, no proof could improve on the communication already achieved.

I have deviated somewhat from the typical thesis method. Typical is to
present a thesis, show the study to determine its Truth, and then give a
conclusion concerning its validity. I have rather given a thesis and argued for
its validity in a variety of ways. My conclusion apologizes for the lack of truth
at which I have arrived. The typical method pretends to have carried out a full,
or "scientific" study arriving at Truth. My method claims only to be an
exploration designed to posit another truth or to influence away from the
accepted truths. Any method will find a truth that isn't universal. Rather than
go back through, reconstructing the paper to support my truth with more "facts",
I chose to leave the paper as evidence of the process. This may or may not
become more clear as the paper is read.
Chapter 1

This thesis is a study inspired by what can be seen to be a problem of lack of meaning or values in people’s lives today and by the current lack of popular demand for homes designed by architects. By focusing on the architectural elite instead of on the consumer or the common user, Architecture has lost its ability to communicate meaning that is understandable and beneficial to the world. The number of homes that aren’t designed by architects can attest to the fact that architects really aren’t giving people what they want. To recreate a common feeling of the worth of homes designed by architects and to confront and work to alleviate problems of meaninglessness in the world today, the architectural community must reorient its pursuit toward giving the consumer what is wanted and needed.

The beliefs and values of Western civilization have been moving away from moralities based on the transcendental toward more mundane concerns. Science and an awareness of the incredible plurality of and disparagement in beliefs around the world have resulted in an intense lack of strong, good¹ meaning in life. Marshall Berman has said that this increased body of experience “threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know,

¹ I intend to make clear how I am using the word good. Please bear with it for the time being.
everything we are."2 The teaching of the "truth" of science in school has created a lack of transcendental importance to our lives. The "truth" of science makes it pretty clear that mankind is a randomly generated "accident" occurring through a set of coincidences. Also that we have been here for an extremely small percentage of the history of the universe and when we're gone we probably won't have had much effect on anything but our small planet. Science has done nothing to reaffirm any transcendental beliefs that formerly gave people reasons for living; in fact the very teaching of scientific method leads one away from believing in that which isn't suggested by fact. These things can't add up to a reaffirmation of the notion of mankind having a purpose for existing.

Communication between people formally unaware of each other's existence has cast a doubt on the convictions of each: The "truth" has been revealed to not be the only truth.3 Advertising has filled the gaps created with a new type of truth that we all know not to be True and yet by which most of us live our lives.

The problem isn't that these truths are less True or even less morally good than beliefs in religions, deities, etc. that guided lives in times previous;

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3 "True" becomes a somewhat tricky word. I will try to vary my spelling like so: True implies an overarching higher truth that is always true. true is Kierkegaard's truth; a subjective truth based only on belief "true" is a subjective truth that one believes is an overarching truth. Trues that don't fit these categories will spelled: true.
but that they are less effective as constructs with which to organize society or one's life. For mankind to be guided easily through the future, there needs to be strong beliefs that will give values that work for the long term satisfaction, happiness, and survival of life on earth.

In Architecture, many of the same problems are evident. If one looks back through history, there have been several movements or periods during which the people believed in their Architecture in a beneficial way. From the time of the primitive hut, to the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Goths, there has been Architecture that people believed was True or real, not to mention divinely inspired. Today, it would be hard to say this about more than a very small percentage of our Architecture. The time in which any Architectural type is believed has grown shorter. The movements pass so quickly it is hard to believe in the current one. People are stuck with a hodge podge in which most can't even keep up enough to have the new meaning explained to them. Architectural types that last thousands of years don't need to be explained for people to understand their reality as Architecture. More recently, Architectural movements pass quickly by, and without benefit to, a non-understanding crowd.

As will be seen, recent architectural movements have in some ways failed in terms of meaning. Modernism may have been true, but its tenets were so negative with regard to the individual, it could only harm instead of helping in a majority of cases. In addition, by being new and different, it lost the
opportunity to use beneficially all the potential meaning to be found in the old. Post-modernism may have benefitted some who felt it looked like Architecture, but it was so obviously bogus or fake, it undermined people's belief in Architecture and truth. Deconstruction's meaning is negative and by its very nature impossible to understand; it's existence will hardly benefit the world. These movements reflect a misguided set of motivations in architects today. They fail to carry a meaning in which people can believe with conviction and they fail to express good things about the world and the individual.

The world has always had problems, but now, there are signs of something particularly ominous in them. Rather than the power struggles that have always existed between people and nations, there have come to be vast increases in certain types of problems that seem to stem in something a bit deeper than the natural drive for individuals to want more for themselves. The current extremely high levels in violent crime and drug abuse, not to mention sexually transmitted diseases and lack of environmental care are indicative of problems within people. When one thinks of what motivates drug abuse or senseless violent crime, it is clear that there is something missing in people's lives.

To live, one must have meaning. It must be understandable, important, and, if one is lucky, somehow inspiring to a great life. Throughout history, many of these meanings have existed. Currently, through science and an
awareness of the incredible plurality of beliefs, people are progressing ever
closer to a type of meaninglessness such as has never before been experienced.
We have been moving from the false, but good and powerful meanings of
religions, deities, and other transcendental types of belief to the still false, but
incredibly unimportant and non-life-affirming beliefs in science and advertising.
Science has taught us that people are a very small step in an infinitely large
history that won't really be affected by our existence. It leaves no room to
define a real importance to our lives other than a personal pain-pleasure value.
This is not to suggest that this is the only value driving people today, but other
more altruistic motivations are merely leftovers from previous times in which
they were supported by beliefs. Moralistic changes are slow and it will take
some generations before the effects of our currently accepted dogma are fully
felt.

Simultaneous with the "true" meanings of science, the most clearly false
and ill-motivated method of social control ever existent is constantly and
powerfully affecting the vast majority of the world. Advertising is designed by
highly-paid, well-trained experts to make people dissatisfied with what they
have.4 Through the irresistible reinforcement of the importance of things or
qualities of no real value, they inculcate an absurdly strange and unlivable set
of values that currently dominates the public's mind.

4 Douglas Kellner, "Reading Images Critically", in Postmodernism, Feminism,
and Cultural Politics
Berman describes the progression from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's modernity of "psychic dizziness. . . capable of everything except solidity and stability" to the twentieth century's complete immersion and acceptance of modernity in which "we have broken or missed the connection between our culture and our lives." 

"[W]e find ourselves today in the midst of a modern age that has lost touch with the roots of its own modernity."  

We are no longer aware of our modernity. The glaring absences in our system of values don't glare, but rather gently nudge, occasionally giving the vague sense of wonder or doubt about the way people live. Berman advocates or optimistically suggests the possibility of remembering the roots of modernity to inspire a healthy, strong culture for today.  

It seems more likely that today's system will continue until at some point its emptiness is obvious to the majority. By that time, it will be almost impossible to regain lost conviction in a more effective alternative.

How ironic that as people move along in our Faustian search for Truth, motivated by admirable goals of helping the world, but failing to examine the deepest roots of how this will work, we progress toward a realization of the insignificance of our lives. And to fill the gap thus created, we accept the most false set of values imaginable, and are thereby prevented from living in a fashion that is tenable for the world or its people.

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6 Ibid p.36.
Mankind today is constantly being alienated in the face of more efficient, less human ways of doing things. Instead of struggling as we always have and succeeding as we always have we have been replaced by "more advanced" ways of doing things. Technology with its great improvements has increased the glory of humanity, but in a funny, hard-to-feel way. With a computer, one can do more than ever before, but somehow the person's doing it becomes lost. It is becoming increasingly difficult to feel one's successes and achievements in a real way.

The search for Truth has brought people closer to a highly rational, provable kind of truth that explains little bits and pieces of the way things work. But it has taken them further from another type of truth that is something in which one can believe, or something that can help give one a way to live. In a similar manner, people have progressed through technology to a situation in which they can do more than they could ever do before, but in which the individual does nothing. The individual in the workplace has been steadily replaced by machines. Jobs have shifted from jobs that do things to jobs that organize things, move numbers, or document the doing of things by other people or machines. Lawyers, accountants, secretaries, businessmen, etc., don't produce; they fiddle around while other things produce. This is effective in terms of efficiency, but has its problems in terms of the meaning it portrays
to people. The work has gotten abstract. Many people, especially those who have true power, don't "do" anything that can be seen. They come home day after day knowing they have done a lot, but they have nothing to show. They accomplish as middle men without seeing the beginning or end of what they do. This functions as another step in man's disjointedness from reality. People are progressing away from individual reality and toward an abstraction of life through which one can live without a real connectedness. It has become the America described by Jean Baudrilliard, "a giant hologram" in which people can't see the simulation that surrounds them because they are part of the simulation.\(^7\)

This disconnectedness or abstractedness can be seen in many aspects of modern man's life: The way the "stranger" or "marginal man" fails to really communicate through the abstraction of his relating to others into a code of non-communication. The way modern war is fought on computers and T.V.s at night without ever really seeing the faces of the victims. The way modern people use the T.V. to see images of the excitement of life without ever needing to get out of a chair and the way this misrepresentation of life serves to mislead one about how life really is. The way advertising serves to replace true feelings of quality with image notions of quality that become inculcated as values as one learns to feel them. "Our world may suddenly seem senseless to many people

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because, for the first time in modern history, it is relatively placeless.\textsuperscript{9} This disconnectedness serves to allow people to not be responsible for their actions while removing a feeling of the concrete importance of their actions.

To keep living, people need to become more connected to their actions, to reality, and to the importance and value of oneself as an individual. Ironically, individual people's actions probably aren't all that important. With a few rare exceptions, just about anything one does could have been done by someone else or been left undone without overly dire consequences. This doesn't matter. The goal is for people to feel important even if they can't be important. People need to have their own small effect in life be magnified in their eyes to the point that it is a self-validating, fulfilling act; to the point that it gives one a reason to live.

Reality cannot be changed to make each individual important to the world at large, but an almost-fictional feeling of importance can be created by changing one's perception of reality. This is not to suggest or advocate the type of fictional importance supplied by consumer culture, in which needs and values are posited in people with only the support of images or previously established fictional values.\textsuperscript{9} the individual act is important; it is the distorting


\textsuperscript{9} I get into trouble when I talk about fictional values; aren't they all fictional? Here, I am refering to values such as the higher quality of a female who looks a certain way being associated with a brand of beer to heighten the
scale of our viewpoint of the world today that reduces the apparentness of this importance. By representing the individual act, we can stress and remind one of its value.

Buildings designed by high style architects have gotten increasingly farther from this type of expression. The materials used today and the way they are put together serve to hide the builder. This has become a desirable quality. Workmanship that shows individuality is considered messy or imperfect, whereas exact repetition of machine made parts is considered more perfect or beautiful. The progression toward this point of view is easy to understand. People, making things by hand struggled to improve the quality of their work, constantly trying to refine or "perfect" their art. Those with the most skill got the most uniform, mistake-free product. In the machine age, new machines could create things with more "perfection" and uniformity than ever before. People, with their tendency to not reevaluate the goals behind progression, assumed this step toward "perfection" was good. Things are gained and things are lost. Building can be done more cheaply and quickly and thus, theoretically, is able to provide for more people, but the loss of a big part of the pride and feeling of accomplishment that can go with work is costly. Cutting down on the number of people necessary to build seems like a valuable thing, but there are a lot of people out there without jobs. This is not to suggest make-work

value of that beer brand. To me this seems more fictional; perhaps it is only newer or more rooted in Mankind.
programs. But unemployment might be due to the emptiness of the jobs that exist. When one feels one is accomplishing something of worth, the work day seems a more acceptable thing; less of a burden and more of a delight. If the subconscious feeling in everyone’s mind was that work were a privilege instead of a duty, more people would be happy working. Any step away from mass production and toward individuality might help accomplish this goal.

These views have, of course, been expressed before. In the late 1800's, William Morris' advocacy of the craftsmanship of the individual came in the form of a call for a revolution.\(^\text{10}\) This revolution didn’t occur then and it won’t occur today. But the problems to which he was reacting, are as present today as they were then. He has been criticized for his naivete by Geoffrey Scott\(^\text{11}\) and others and yet, the prophetic nature of his still pertinent ideas, validates them. His approaches, though failing to revolutionize the world still have an effectiveness. Perhaps his naivete lay in hoping his method would solve the problems of the world, not in seeing that they could.

What needs to be ended is the mass production mentality. Morris was "less opposed to machines than to the meretricious ugliness of a machine civilization."\(^\text{12}\) The problem isn’t in the technology, but in the feelings that can


come from the constant expression of it. "The workmanship of houses today tends to overemphasize the control of the machine and underemphasize the freedom of the hand."¹３ Any time this hand can be expressed, it is a step in the right direction. Use of materials like porcelain metal panels or drivit hides the person in the work. They are attached in a manner that hides their attachment. They don't talk about someone putting them together. They achieve an abstraction of built form, almost to the point of being pure form.

Pure form sounds so good until one carefully considers what is good about it and about its meaning. These buildings become "machines for living in" instead of being things built by people like us for other people like us to use.

Anything that reduces it to man will work: a sawn board end, every nail head, anything that is a size for an individual to put it in place. This type of Architecture will serve to surround people with reminders of what the individual can do, not in an abstract, what-man's-technology-can-do way, but in a simple reminder of the power and importance of the individual.
Chapter 3

Today, in the age of Post Modernity and Deconstructionism, much of the currently accepted dogma has negative effects on mankind. These philosophical movements, concerned with the loss of history or the impossibility of the accurate expression of meaning, serve not only to comment on, but to contribute to these conditions. These movements would be better left out of some day-to-day expressions such as Architecture.

Deconstruction is a movement that formed part of post structuralism, which was interested in escaping totalising discourses. Michael Benedikt referenced Johnathan Culler as defining it using the principle of differance, the process of hierarchy reversal, the exchange of marginality and centrality, and the relationship of iterability to meaning.¹⁴ No source has been willing to risk its simplification to a few sentences. For my purposes, it will be okay to do what Derrida, Culler, Christopher Norris, and Benedikt have refused to do, by reducing it much further. Deconstructionism points out the existence of a multiplicity of meanings or signifieds to each signifier. The result is an impossibility of accurate one to one correspondence in the transmission of meaning. This notion has been taken further by Niezsche saying that "truth is not a matter of correspondence to reality" or by Derrida saying that "what we

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call real is not really real."\textsuperscript{15} Seen in this light it can be said to express the "truth" of their being no Truth. This idea is used in the hope of dismantling some of the dominant power structures that exist through their use (or misuse) of representation. This is certainly a valid and worthy position, but it seems that through the entrance of deconstructionism (or symbols of it) into mass culture, much of its benefit as an analytic tool is lost and many harmful side effects are felt.

An additional problem is the gap between the philosophical movements of Modernity, Post modernity, and Deconstructionism, and their counterparts in Architecture, often given the same name, but without correspondence in use. It is laughable is to look at the confusion in many of architectural Deconstruction(v)ism's practitioners. Constructivism, is an art movement, led by Russians such as Malevich, Leonidov, and Lissitsky, displaying wild, non-traditional compositions and geometries. It seems that the architects got confused and tried to use the literary movement to justify the use of the art movement's forms with which they thought it would be fun to play. This of course, isn't fair to the Eisenman, Liebeskind, and Tschumi, but having seen Wolf Prix of Coop Himmelblau lecture, flippantly, joyously displaying his philosophical ignorance for the crowd,\textsuperscript{16} it seems that some of the


\textsuperscript{16} Wolf Prix, lecture at Lousiana State University, November, 1991.
Deconstructionist architects are missing the point of both the philosophy and the Architecture.

Clearly, Derrida's deconstructionism is very complex. Benedikt contends "that very, very few people understand Derrida in any detail, certainly far fewer than claim to." It is this that allows my preceding, perhaps incorrect, definition. I am not trying to get it right, but to show a way in which it is used. The problem isn't Derrida, but the warped infiltration of his ideas into mass culture. The attempt to express complicated ideas in a building will inevitably result in a wide variety of interpretations. (This notion is intrinsic to Deconstructionism) In the expression of deconstructionism through Architecture, many of the interpretations are negative ones.

Demonstrating the lack of validity to a notion of absolute Truth undermines truth. Kierkegaard and others have pointed out that truth is based on subjective belief, so that it is through the believing that truth can be. This is to say that truth is not an overarching, objective thing, but rather a personal set of beliefs. Richard Rorty suggests that there is nothing beneath socialization so that our socialization, or that which we are taught is true, is true. This isn't the point being argued here; one will find that whether this is the case or not, with regard to people's life on earth, the function will be the

same. Knowing the "truth" or believing one knows the Truth can give one something on which to base one's life; this is something that people need. The awareness of the impossibility of knowing what is True makes a belief in truth impossible despite the fact that, without this awareness, it is possible, not only for this belief to exist, but for it to carry with it the life enhancing benefits of feeling one knows what is True. Peter Eisenman says that he avoids nostalgic house qualities in favor of possibilities that might have been repressed by that metaphysic.¹⁹ He is trying to get at other truths besides the one adopted by people in the past. He fails to see that it doesn't matter what forms were repressed; it is in the human that the truth lies. By avoiding the forms in which people believe, he is missing out on the most "true" forms. Rorty says that "imagination, and not reason is the key human faculty."²⁰ To guide our lives, we need imagination not truth. Deconstructionism with its denial of the possibility of knowing Truth may be the only "true" Architecture, but the imagination of Truth, more powerfully existent in times previous, is better for guiding our lives. We need to strengthen that imagination of Truth. Deconstructionist principles serve to reveal the lack of a foundation for any belief. The negative effects of the ensuing impossibility of knowing the truth far outweigh the benefits of a skeptic stance. The irrevocable loss of the possibility of a personal truth is something to be avoided at all costs.


It comes down to goals: In philosophy, the goal may be Truth. In Architecture, one might hope the goal to be to benefit man, make the world better, support the future, etc. In this latter set of goals, a very different set of criteria from Truth is indicated. One needs a set of beliefs that will imply value and thus allow the possibility of good. In 1877, Charles Pierce wrote: "It is certainly best for us that our beliefs should be such as may truly guide our actions so as to satisfy our desires; and this reflection will make us reject every belief which does not seem to have been so formed as to insure this result."\textsuperscript{21} This can be read as moving away from Truth and toward convenient, life sustaining beliefs. If Architecture is to help people, it needs to support or inculcate beneficial beliefs or truths instead of trying to force the awareness and acceptance of the Truth of no Truth.

Architectural deconstructionism, in the hands of Peter Eisenman and his followers expresses its philosophy in an interesting fashion. The intended purpose is to not express. They try to get away from all forms of expression to escape the dominant power structure of representation. It attempts to use randomly generated form to avoid any possibility of coherent meaning.\textsuperscript{22} This sounds good in a way, but of course it cannot really function. When the


Architecture gets built, it becomes fixed. It is not random, but is designed based on a precise criterion. It ends up not avoiding meaning, but expressing meaning through its incoherent visual look.

The Architecture is further removed from its expressed goals by the lectures that inevitably go along with it. If the deconstructionists or a deconstructionist had started creating the wild forms with no explanation, it would have achieved the goal more effectively. All traditional forms of expression left behind, it would have been meaningless (and not accepted). Instead, they explained it to us. Seeing the lack of validity in language, they invented a new language and told us how to understand it, thus inheriting all the problems and immoralities stemming from the power of language or
representation. Even worse, because instead of expressing quietly or expressing what is accepted or unnoticed, they loudly express what is new and polemical. This is every bit as much of a dominant imposition on culture as is the use of the traditional formal expression to which the deconstructionists are opposed. Charles Jencks says that Peter Eisenman's "position becomes a kind of terrorist tactic, that forces a closure of discussion; that in its own way is just as repressive of the true otherness of pluralism as classicism."^23 Leon Krier says, "Despite their claims to be champions of a democratic and pluralist approach, these bodies [the profession and its institutions] show very little support towards contemporary classicists."^24


I have gotten away from my purpose, which was to discredit the deconstructionists, based, not on their criteria, but on my criteria. If the goal is to create or reaffirm strong, good, believable meaning that gives one a reason and method for living life, Aspects of Modernism, Post-modernism, and Deconstructionism are very harmful. They serve to take away from people's ability to believe in some beneficial values that must be accepted on faith.

Peter Eisenman says:

"Modernism was a condition of alienation because the questions of truth, value, origin, and substance were called into question in science, philosophy, and theology. In fact, it is this calling into question of the supposedly natural truths and expositions of disjunctions in each discipline that Modernism is about."25

Deconstructionism, Architecture's first expression of Modernism as described above,26 can be seen as discrediting belief and meaning. By "calling truths into question," it undermines the possibility for belief. It's buildings are incoherent. They express contradictions to many of the things people are ready to accept about the world or about building. They clearly deny all traditional form. They also deny other, less political things such as gravity, economy of means, and apparent logic. This functions in several ways, some negative, some perhaps positive. Denying what is accepted is an effective way to shake up or disrupt society, leading it to change and perhaps to improve. It also


26 Ibid.
serves to call into question the accepted notions on which people base their lives. If some basic ideas are called into question, others automatically are by association. If one assumes good is good, evil is evil, and gravity is gravity; but then passes a building that says gravity is unimportant, it leaves good and evil in a funny position.

In the past, transcendental meanings concerning matters of value, morality, and, thereby, social control were often in the sphere of the church. People had faith in religion and religion gave them a reason and a way to live. The religion was supported and explained by the Architecture and there was not much to weaken the faith in the church or the belief that the Architecture was speaking the Truth. At times, the church clearly became much too
powerful and dominant, but it did fulfill certain needs that aren't being fulfilled today.

Today, religion can no longer be taken too seriously by a majority of the population and there is nothing to effectively take its place. It is hard to accurately measure variations in degree of contentment of life in different generations, but many of today's problems could be read as signs of something missing in people's lives. Philosophies and architectures whose goal (or unwitting result) is to further the awareness of meaninglessness in life can only advance these problems.

Post-modernism in Architecture with its paper-thin historical references is perhaps more witless than deconstructionism, but I think just as damaging. Charles Jencks defines Post-Modernism in Architecture as "an Architecture that
was professionally based and popular as well as one that was based on new techniques and old patterns. Double coding to simplify means both elite/popular and new/old. This is a very sensible way of combining two types of good for marketing reasons, but each of them loses its reality: "elite" is built cheaply and "popular" looks elite; "old" is really old, it's new (obviously so), and "new" is trying to look old. Some Post-Modern works, such as Sterling's Neue Staatsgalerie manage to pull off the multivalent nature of Post-Modern meaning in a way that expresses an effort to express this meaning. This is interesting and worthwhile. It probably doesn't need to be expressed on every street corner, but is interesting to see the building used as commentary. The vast majority of Post-Modern buildings aren't making a commentary so much as trying to really be old and new, elite and popular. It is their see-through attempt to have the public believe it that makes it reprehensible. This type of Post-Modern Architecture, seen in the latest batch of corporate America's headquarters isn't intended to express empty meaninglessness, but it serves very well to do so. Its clearly false references to a time when the world had meaning can only function to expose by association the possible falseness of other meanings handed down from the past. It is an architecture of fakeness which cannot help but point out that many aspects of what is supposed to be

real, like Architecture, is actually fake. The result of this reading of post-modern architecture, like the intended reading of Deconstructionism, may bring us closer to the Truth, but it cannot help us avoid the horror of it.

Modernism in Architecture, though sensible in a time which needed housing built quickly and cheaply has shown itself to be a failure for reasons of meaning. Although designed to be the democratic solution to dominance and inequality, its denial of the individual's spiritual worth turned out to be more important than its supposed care for the individual in terms of economic

\[23\] I feel like this notion is obvious and has been said enough to not need a reference; but it is said perhaps most artfully in Michael Benedikt's *For An Architecture of Reality*, Lumen Books, New York, 1987.

considerations. Pruitt Igoe is the most commonly given example of a project's failure due to its psychological effect on the inhabitant, but other examples can be seen still in some form of use in cities around the globe. They serve as a reminder of the vital importance of what type of meaning is expressed. Truth, in terms of technology or building strategy, was shown to be less important than the expression of what people want and psychologically need.


31 Pruitt-Igoe has been called one of the central myths of Post-Modernism, as in Ktherine Bristol "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth" *Journal of Architectural Education*, v.44, no.3, May, 1991, pp. 163-171. in which she blames the management for the failure, not the building. Many unmanaged buildings don't have to be destroyed. Many undestroyed modern buildings have the same apathetic lack of concern (or hatred?) of the public spaces. Perhaps the fault of modern housing is that the management must do what an inspired public could do.
Modernism's failure to recognize the individual made it a highly negative and unacceptable idea for supporting the future of man. Its undifferentiated treatment of housing units, its construction method that doesn't express the work of the individual, and its expression of a machine aesthetic as opposed to decorative ideas stemming from people all add to create an Architecture that denies the individual. Deconstructionism also fails to provide anything reaffirming for the individual. Post-modernism might have helped if it could have been believable, but its obvious falseness served to discredit itself and thereby all transmitted meaning. As time has progressed, we have seen the importance of the individual as well as the importance of all of mankind be drawn into increasing doubt. Systems that fail to maintain previously accepted, though perhaps faultily based, notions of this importance can only rush man toward a time of no meaning, no value, and no morals.

Since the time of the ancient Greeks, Mankind has been looking for Truth. Now, we have found that there is no Truth or at least no truth that can support life the way older, less True truths were able to. This seems to imply a necessity to reorient our search, away from Truth, and toward some positive set of beliefs. This is a difficult notion to accept; all of our education places such an emphasis on knowledge and learning. Since Socrates with: "The unexamined life isn't worth living", we have accepted his pursuit. Now, with the advent of Deconstructionism, it becomes clear that the examined life may not be worth
living either. The mind-opening thought of the deconstructionists is something with which we will have to live, but it doesn’t have to be the focus of our lives; in fact, the more we can avoid it, as a group and as individuals, the better will be the result for mankind. Ralph Waldo Emerson says: "It is very unhappy, but too late to be helped, the discovery that we exist. That discovery has been called The Fall of Man." He goes on to say that we must "hold hard to the scandalous poverty of self-trust. . .to possess our axis more firmly"32 It is hard to use this "scandalous poverty" to guide one’s life, but it has worked from the beginning of mankind up until about 200 years ago. This is not to say it made everything happy or conflict free, but it did allow meaning or belief. It is impossible to know how happy previous peoples were, but it is easy to see the problems in Western lives now, and difficult to see the new repressions filling the gaps created by today’s lack of meaning. Anything that can be done to strengthen one’s hold rather than shaking it loose will help us in the millenniums to come.

Many of people’s commonly held values won’t function too well to maintain a long-term existence for everyone on this small planet. Obviously, most of the values or desires of people today have been dictated by certain power structures’ use of representation to attain their ends. This is certainly true of people’s desires in material goods, lifestyle, political powers,

32 Emerson, Ralph Waldo
consumables, and the opposite gender\textsuperscript{33}. There needs to be some type of very carefully applied method for undermining this use of representation's power\textsuperscript{34}, but that really isn't Architecture's most effective function. Architecture can display what is real in contrast to what the media and advertising tends to display. Not displaying false, created-by-man values is Architecture's best method of combatting the misuse of representation. This way will not undermine the believability of "truth" as done by Deconstructionism, the believability of Architecture as done by Post Modern Architecture, or the worth of the individual as done by Modern Architecture.

\textsuperscript{33} Go to a place where media doesn't exist to see how different values can be. These places exist. We call them primitive or say they haven't progressed as far as us. "Progress" here describes the degree to which they have fulfilled our self-created values. It is interesting to compare the relative states of contentment and permanence (barring outside influence) between these cultures and ours.

\textsuperscript{34} Douglas Kellner's lessons in "critical image reading" as a mandatory class is perhaps a good direction to head. Deconstructionism is trying to achieve this, but, obviously, I think they are losing too much that is good in their effort to get rid of what is bad.
Chapter 4

Most of the problems I have pointed out can be traced to confusions about goals. Established and accepted goals such as Truth, change, or the accurate expression of the times are not always justified by a deeper good. "Truth" has been shown to be not True, but it is used as a goal often at the expense of other more important issues, such as believable meaning. Architects need to take their focus away from philosophical "Truth" and put it on the transmission of believable meaning or on the realities of the world.

By denying knowledge about what can’t be known, Deconstructionism has a truth. But its truth can be negative for mankind. It is designed to shake up things or loosen present power structures, removing their control by deconstructing their methods of representation. It is unfortunate that their method is also increasing the problem. Without believable, good meaning in life, we have no social control. Without social control\textsuperscript{35}, we must have stronger, more fascist governments (advertising included). In an effort to reduce the unfavorable use of power by media and government, the deconstructionists are trying to weaken their methods of representation, but are thus destroying

\textsuperscript{35} I use the term social control not to imply a dominant, brain washing force like that in Orwell's 1984. I am referring to the necessary control that allows us to live together in a functioning fashion; to what keeps bullies from taking what they want or hurting others. In the past, this has been provided by religion, laws, and other sources of forced or voluntary morality. Today the bullies have the power at many scales and they have no reason not to use it.
our option, truth (in the form of "truth"). This is to say that people need to believe in something. Deconstructionism, by undermining people's belief in one set of "unprovable"s is leaving them vulnerable to another, perhaps more negative, set. Particularly sad is that big business (through advertising) and government (through media) will not be defeated, but morality, without a defender, is almost gone already.

In terms of Philosophy, the mistake that causes these problems is difficult to pin down. Philosophy looks for the Truth. It tries to analyze man's societal condition. It is not intended to be a causal force so much as a study. Of course, these goals can't function purely. Philosophy has always affected man's thought and even drastically changed it. In the past, to some extent through the time of the enlightenment, its influence has usually been good or relatively slight. "truth" has always seemed to help the individual's awareness, expanding his mind and making him more able to cope effectively with the world. At some point this has changed and it is hard to readjust to the pessimistic view of the world in which the more we know, the worse off we are. (**Maybe I'm the only one who has done it. I'm beginning to feel like one of those guys who stands on the street corner with the sign that says "The end is near". I guess that's my fate. I think when society gets a little bit crazy in one direction, it may be good to have someone very crazy in the other direction standing on the street corner.) But that is philosophy's quandary: keep pursuing Truth (the unattainable, no, the nonexistent) in a negative way, or give up on Truth and
quit being Philosophy.

In Architecture, the problem is much easier. Architecture's goal is different from that of philosophy. Some would say the goal is to create shelter, while others would hope that it fulfill a higher, or at least more complicated function. This may vary from some type of communication to the maintenance of some power structure. In *For An Architecture of Reality*, Michael Benedikt is espousing the moving away from an Architecture that speaks, to an Architecture that simply "is".

He doesn't believe the world or reality "can be read like a book" and doesn't think Architecture should be either. The position taken in my thesis is very similar in many respects, but assumes reality can be read if not like a

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book, at least like some strange movie that can imply meanings or "truths". These meanings aren't literal like the deconstructionists or referential, like the Post-modernists but are just a presentation of the facts allowing the "reading" to take place in the mind of the perceiver. Benedikt references Ortega y Gasset and Merleau-Ponty suggesting that just being alive as a human being is "enough to guarantee the world's meaningfulness". This can be Architecture's goal: to bear the meaning of reality, without needing to speak, but only by exuding a reality that can give mankind all the meaning needed.

"Nietzsche has caused a lot of confusion by inferring from "truth is not a matter of correspondence to reality" to "what we call 'truths' are just useful lies." The same confusion is occasionally found in Derrida, in the inference from "there is no reality as the metaphysicians have hoped to find" to "what we call 'real'is not really real." Such confusions make Nietzsche and Derrida liable to charges of self-referential inconsistency - to claiming to know what they themselves claim cannot be known...

"It is to say that our purposes would be served best by ceasing to see truth as a deep matter, as a topic of philosophical interest, or "true" as a term which repays "analysis." "The nature of truth" is an unprofitable topic."

Richard Rorty uses this as part of his motivation for a idea of a "contingency" to language. He is willing to accept the impossibility of defining Truth, preferring to get to the more useful business of establishing a way of...
working with it. This is even more vital in Architecture in which the pursuit of Truth can only distract from the pressing business at hand.

The important thing is to define or ascertain the goal at the most basic level possible and work upward from there until Architecture becomes defined by it. This is the philosophical way to approach all things: take what you are willing to accept as true and then using a logic, work outward until you have created a way to live. This paragraph may set up a starting point, framework, or to use derrida's term, a parergon that will make my writing unacceptable or pointless for many Architects, but will create its validity for those who accept this frame. There are many goals in Architecture today. Some seem to be unquestioningly accepted as good without a connection to a more basic "good". Others are perhaps based on a "good" that I don't adhere to. I'm not trying to explain what is truly moral: nothing is immoral unless it is contrary to your moral code. But, if your goals or "good" are different from mine, my every premise is pointless. If not, there may be a point in reading on.

My goal or "good" is to make life as good as it can be for people and for the world. This idea isn't based on Truth or Morality. I don't think truth or morality exists as a definable thing that can tell us how to live. It is based probably on the training I received at the hands of the world around me and was probably established at a very young age. The point I'm trying to make is that it isn't based on Truth, (we have been shown that objective truths do not exist) but I have accepted it. It gives me a goal that can direct my activities in
life and this makes life easier for me. It is convenient that my "truth" is something that many belief systems, religions, etc. tend to agree with, so it receives more affirmation than discrediting, thus helping to maintain its believability in my eyes. I think it has unfortunate consequences for me and the world when it is shown that this type of moral value has a very shaky foundation.

Humans are a very new, and destined to be short-lived, element in the universe; and yet we tend to think we are so important. It is hard to know where to draw the line on importance: if one draws it around oneself, one is too self centered; if one draws it around the "whole universe and everything", it is hard to feel very important. This line of what is and isn't important has been drawn at many different places: around "just me", around each individual, around rich, white men, around each individual and his family, around Americans, around all humans, etc. This last one seems to make sense, but for some, it is hard to leave out all animals, then all life on earth, then all life anywhere, and then we are back to the whole universe and me not being important. Maybe this is the best, but it makes it very hard to live. The Deconstructionists are pointing out what is probably the truth: that there is no reason to draw the line anywhere in between everything and just yourself. Or maybe they are saying the line shouldn't exist, because nothing is important. Their short-coming is that they don't give us a way to live. If the whole universe is what matters, man doesn't matter. If all that matters to each individual is himself, the world
will soon fall into disfunction and each life will be more miserable. If nothing is important including yourself and even your pain and pleasure, life is hard to live.39

We need that line. We need an idea that can give the individual importance and yet provide a morality or social control that helps the world to work in a way that will last a long time and make us feel good. There is no justification for where the line is drawn, but the result of having it is beneficial to "me". Man has always had a meaning and it has never been True, but without it we are doomed. I hate power, but fear anarchy; I hate one dominant meaning, but see we can't live with no meaning. The Deconstructionists, like the blacks or the feminists are mad at the power structure of meaning and hate the problems it causes. What the Deconstructionists are doing needs to be done, but taking it too far could create new problems that will be hard to cure.

Life is like a pendulum that swings back and forth, trying to find Truth or stasis. We are in a constant process of going too far in one direction, then too far in the other direction. Always we are reacting. If people react to the problems of meaning, representation, and power, by deconstructing all of it, we will sink to a horrific low of drug-crazed, suicidal, violent, nature-abusing anarchy. The counter-reaction, which is already taking place, will be the

39 Richard Ingersoll, wry wit that he is, writes "because? . . ." in the margin next to this. He's got me; life would probably be easy to live with no importance to pain and pleasure. I'll retreat to the safety of my non-scientific stance and say, "It seems to me this life would be hard."
tightening of authority by those in power. If the loss of meaning continues, it may reach a point from which it can't recover, or worse, the people, desperately needing meaning, may turn to religion or some other magic answer, beginning a new inquisition, without the hiding places of a dark ages. We need to always push the pendulum gently, away from the problems of meaning, but not away from meaning. We need to expose the falseness of meaning and representation used by advertising and politics, but to lose the ability of architecture to express meaning would be to pointlessly waste a tool that can be used in some powerfully good ways. Meaning needs to come from something larger than mankind, so as to avoid its dominant use by one faction. The man-made meanings of a philosophical movement like Deconstructionism will not always seem as true as they do today. If focusing on the "truth" will hurt the world, it should not be focused on.

The word "true" has been growing more and more confused as my writing has gone on. This is fitting perhaps; it has done the same thing throughout history. In the previous paragraphs, I was suggesting that truth could be a harmful thing, using the word "true" to talk about the Deconstructionist philosophy or similar philosophies which based on logic appear true. Despite Deconstructionism, it seems that there are certain ideas that seem closer to truth than others. These truths will be called reality. This term, I hope, can imply a set of things that are apparent; not concepts that achieve their truth from being talked about, but things we can see and experience.
Architects have drifted quite far from reality. Their expression is so abstract or referential, it doesn't have a clarity or definitiveness. It is easy to see the removed nature of much of today's Architecture in which a two dimensional doric column refers to a true column, which refers to the Greek nation, which refers to their democracy. So it comes down to an expression of politics. It's like an anecdotal form of the news, almost like "Good Morning America": happy references to politics without saying anything about them.

Worse is deconstructionism in which strange angles and juxtapositions, and incomprehensible form speak in a new language, that defined by a lecture, can refer to a philosophical movement. Charles Jencks says it is "a Mandarin text demanding a reader's guide"\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{40} Charles Jencks, referring to Eisenman's work, in Papadakis (1988) p.59.
If the architect can express what is really here: the sun, the moon, light, and gravity, the Architecture will begin to speak in a way that reinforces its credibility. It won't be political and won't advertise. It will be respected.
By not showing the favoritism displayed in Architecture that refers to certain political regimes, it will inspire more freedom than Architecture of democracy referring to Greece. At the same time it will separate itself from the disrespected forms of representation that have been coopted to self-centered ends.

The Architecture of Truth needs to be universal, not only in terms of what it expresses, but to whom it expresses. Much of the Architecture today speaks to a certain group of people, excepting others who aren’t familiar with the books or lectures needed to understand what it is talking about. Rather than gaining respect through communication of what is True, it alienates people who aren’t already "in the know". It communicates to those who already know what it is saying and leaves out the others. Eisenman’s method is the most reprehensible in this sense. Through the addition of an arbitrary element in his form-sourcing, the creation of a fictive rationale, or the use of abstractions of abstractions, he creates a gap between the source and the form, divorcing his work from any interpretable, linear source or meaning.41 But then he goes from school to school telling Architecture students where it came from and what it means. He’s scared to be arbitrary even though today’s architectural interpretation of deconstructionism seems to advocate arbitrariness (before Benedikt42). It forces a separation between the architectural elite and people

41 Peter Eisenman, "Weak Form" lecture at Rice University, Fall, 1989.
on the street. So instead of creating the commonness of shared communication (like the makers of Stonehenge despite hundreds of years) he has fostered the distrust of confusion in people who might have previously thought they liked Architecture. This weakens the power of Architecture.

Architecture needs to express to everyone, from any nation and any walk of life, without alienating anyone through inaccessibility or confusion. Its clarity or Truth needs to be bigger than the pettiness of politics. I keep coming back to straightforwardness. More appealing than continuing the move to more and deeper language which must be explained or taught, is the notion of an Architecture in which the language is so basic, it is a given. Derrida talks of an arche-language\textsuperscript{43} which came before man’s language. This is the language used by nature. Part of the difficulty in the architectural deconstructionist’s interpretation of Deconstruction is that Derrida was talking about the fallacy of man’s language, not the fallacy of all expression. In a similar fashion, the truth that has been framed by man is not Truth; but there is Truth that was here before man and will be here after man. To get away from the problems of language, we don’t need to forsake expression, but only to leave the confusion of abstracted signification (language). When one uses a word to refer to an idea it is an abstraction. Derrida thinks the necessity and impossibility of nondeconstructable framing makes accurate expression impossible. When one can express actively or without abstraction, it isn’t deconstructable. When

\textsuperscript{43} Benedikt (1991) p. 48.
something's framing is totally inherent, its expression can be True. This is a meaning that is not referential or abstracted. It may not be able to express a very complicated idea, but it can express all the True ones and all the important ones. One can express gravity with a light thing sitting on a heavy one; or the materiality of a stone by using it in compression; or night and day, light and dark with a window that lets it in (dim light means cloudy day, little drops of water hitting the glass means rain); or shelter with a roof that can be understood; or enclosure with walls whose presence can be experienced; these things are meaning. They are the easily understood, unarguable meaning that makes life clearer. The expression of these meanings shows people that Architecture speaks the Truth, undeconstructable and nonpolitical.
Chapter 5

To gain Truth or credibility, Architecture needs permanence. The recent quickly changing movements in Architecture undermine Architecture's believability as a carrier of Truth. To regain its reputation as a speaker of Truth, Architecture needs to avoid the expression of the transient truths of philosophy and politics in favor of longer lasting Truths of nature and what it is to be human.

Truth carries with it some notions of absoluteness. When one sees something that is true one place but not another, it can no longer be accepted as True. When a truth is discredited, it seems that the truth had always been false. In this fashion, change has an effect on one's feelings about reality. When a belief, for example the notion of the world's being flat is later shown to be false, we can no longer see that before Columbus, it had been true. One then infers that other falsehoods will be found in one's current set of beliefs. It calls into question what one accepts as True and thus undermines the power of current truth, taking away the value it could carry. This is the problem of modernity: too much change for Truth to exist. Jean Baudrillard says, "this entire society... is running straight ahead, because they have lost the formula for stopping." He laments the lack of truth in America, blaming our "sidereal" condition, to a large extent, on our penchant for change. This penchant is hard

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to justify, but much harder to thwart. It seems as if people are bored. It is like Goethe's Faust jumping up and shouting, "Why should men let things go on being the way they have always been? Isn't it about time for mankind to assert itself against nature's tyrannical arrogance, to confront natural forces in the name of "the free spirit that protects all rights"? The expression of this ineluctable desire for change, with its ability to render unreal what is real, is what shakes the fragile foundation that holds us above the void of meaninglessness.

If one assumes Architecture is supposed to be True (that's why it has a capital "A"), any exposure of it as unTrue destroys a previously valid representation of Truth. Architectural movements have been changing with constantly increasing speed. Like Walter Benjamin's angel observing the wreckage of man's past piling behind him, each backward glance after the refutation of the previous "truth" further discredits the truth of the current movement. By contrast, anything that can stay the same and remain true over the years is constantly increasing its validity or truth. Claude Perrault, in the 17th century, pointed out that, in Architecture, beauty or correctness was not intrinsic to certain forms, but had to be learned. The orders were necessary to establish rules for keeping things the same so that they could become

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46 Walter Benjamin, "Thesis on the Philosophy of History", in Illuminations.
beautiful. In times of extremely long-lived Architectural movements, a reality or "truth" that can be very powerful is obtained. The constant change and newness in today's Architecture can only stress a lack of Truth in reality.

Architecture needs to express the Truths that last, not the "fly by night" truths. Expressing politics or philosophy is destined to tie Architecture in with what is fickle. It will become architecture, without weight, unable to help the world. Expressing man's whims will discredit Architecture. People will be able to foresee the passing of each movement even as it is being created. They will view it (as they do now) as something that doesn't have much real significance.

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Architecture used to be a profoundly meaningful medium that expressed the condition of man and the world. If one looks to the Egyptians or the Gothics, it is easy to see Architecture being used to imply a structure to the world and man's position in it. As time progressed, our Architectural statements began changing with increasing speed. One can see a multiplicity of different movements come in and out of vogue during the course of one's life. This has led to a reduction in Architecture's role, from the carrier of Truth to an expressor of the current style or trend. Clearly, man and what man believes does change and, in this sense, expressing the shifts in man's consciousness is a valid "truth", but this is problematic. In the past, Architecture did represent political structures or currently accepted philosophies, but this was at times in which these things tended to last much longer, or at least long enough so that their expression didn't discredit the expressor. Expressing a political movement that lasted for five thousand years or a religion that was universally believed for hundreds of years begins to be a big, "real" meaning. Today, while we know how transient these things are, they are hardly worthy of being represented by the Truth of Architecture. This paragraph becomes more clear if you understand that I define big corporations as being the dominant political institutions represented by their Modern or Post-modern headquarters; and Deconstructionism as being one of many manifestations of the religion of no religion.

Architects want a significance and a richness to their work so they use
philosophy or the new and polemical as a source, form giver, or a topic of Architectural conversation. This gives it fickle thinness. To achieve true power it must strike a deeper chord from the heart of man. Amos Rapoport suggests that our problems are not so different from those of the past. He says,"We need the rich time dimension to avoid the common triviality of living in the moment, as a continuous prelude to rushing into the future."43 The expression of change doesn't have the power of memory or the expression of the way things are and have been and always will be. To have richness, one can show a piece of life: the more simple it is, the better it will be. A place to sit that looks like a place to sit will have much more richness and power and unarguable Truth than the philosophical statements of the Deconstructionists or the ironic, referential forms of the post-moderns. Something that can express a memory, not just of one's youth but of the ways it has always been to be a human, this is power. A lot of what it is to be human and what it is to live does change; but there are many types of change. The fleeting, often whimsical changes in individual's opinions and fondnesses are for newspapers, art, writings, and philosophy. Other more permanent change, like the Earth under gravity's constant pull, or cyclic change like the alternating seasons or shifts from day to night are the realm of Architecture. Writings and art are meant for compelling, moving us onward, asking for change when needed. Their datedness makes the old,

informative and the new, interesting. Buildings, like Truth, are meant to last longer. Louis Kahn's buildings convey the permanent change of reality without becoming emersed in the temporality of mankind's thought. Of the changing character of light in the Kimbell, he says, "the museum has as many moods as there are moments in time, and never as long as the museum remains as a building will there be a single day like the other." It is like a flag attached to the aterae of a car moving straight down the highway. If Architecture talks about the flutters of the flag, its constant chatter will nullify its ability to show the movement of the car. Using Architecture to show what is temporarily in vogue destroys its ability to show what is permanent; and for this nothing can take Architecture's place.

Architecture needs to step out of history's (I should say man's) high speed procession. To do this it needs to express what is more permanent than people. Expression of the world, such as nature or physics, expands Architecture out of the realm of people to what was before people and what will be after people. The Anastazi cliff dwellings at Mesa Verdi (also other parts of Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico) express an intense awareness of the seasons and the way the sun moves through the sky. Today, we can look at these dwellings, see that the sun's movement has not changed, understand the non-changing aspects of what they were and we are reacting to, and perhaps learn from their methods of dealing with these things. We can feel a connection

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49 Kahn (1975), p. 16.
to, or commonality with, these people of so long before. This is power.

The constant change expressed in Architecture is harmful not only by discrediting the believability of Architecture. It also acts in a causative fashion leading mankind to progress too quickly. In a way, all aspects of mass culture affect mankind simultaneously. When they coincide, all pressing in one direction, change occurs very quickly in a way that causes the syndrome of alienation discussed earlier. In recent history, it seems as if all aspects of culture are constantly pressing for change. Anything encouraging stasis is viewed as retrograde or negative and anything pressing for progress is viewed as good. The definition of the word "progress has changed. The idea of "toward a higher state" or "toward perfection" has been added to the idea of simply "a moving forward". To avoid the problems of overly rapid, out-of-control change, some aspects of culture must point to staying the same, or at least toward changing much more slowly. Robert Venturi references the aerospace industry, showing that even they need to "think small, not big", pointing out that society needs to finehone and reorganize instead of constantly pressing forward. Today, Mankind's rapid change has clearly caused us problems including the pathetic lack of care for the environment and the apparent meaninglessness in people's lives. The world would benefit greatly if Architecture could take on the role of being this motivating force toward a slower progression through

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history.

The death or loss of history is another way to describe the problem of our condition of modernity. It is caused by the increased awareness we have gained from advanced communication and more rapid change. Instead of being a part of history that doesn’t question how we got here, we are taken a step back, seeing the random set of circumstances that got us where we are. We are given a perspective to see that there were alternatives and our situation loses its rootedness: we are set adrift. This gives a more objective viewpoint, but we are left without enough to even have a viewpoint. By taking away the frame or parergon⁵¹, we have no way of seeing.

Through the hastening toward our future, we are forced to progress in a direction that may or may not be to our benefit. The unquestioning acceptance of the value of moving toward the future has led man through history and change for a long time. Hegel’s notion of reaching the static, strife-free end of history has been given up on. The idea of the worth of World Historic Cultures pressing the world forward to the end of history is not taken so seriously any more. It would benefit mankind if this change in philosophy could be reflected in architectural goals, shifting from the pursuit of change or the new, to the

⁵¹ This is Derrida’s term used to describe a frame or set of ideas/beliefs that are accepted by the author and reader. If these givens are not accepted, the writing (or philosophy) will fall apart. He uses this notion to discredit the overall validity of certain works. I am suggesting that parergons are necessary and do not imply a lack of validity to the argument presented. If truth is subjective, and parergons are subjective, truths supported by parergons are valid.
pursuit of stasis or permanence.

There are things that last in a steady continuum. There are things whose Truth is so innate and deeply rooted, it is not deconstructable by even the most critical eye. They are not to be found in the changing whims of mankind. They are much deeper, in the continual, slow change of Nature, in Mankind's deepest nature, and in the way these two nature's can fit together.
Chapter 6

For one to feel happy and good about living one's life, there needs to be some feeling of importance to one's existence: one needs to matter. Many things in the world today tend to deny this importance of the individual. Architecture could act against this negative trend, but the current world situation and the motivations and goals of architects seem to lead many architects to being a part of this problem. To help the world, Architecture needs to be focused on reinstilling in the individual a notion of importance.

Recent change in mankind has had a negative effect on the way the individual is regarded. Since the passing of the middle ages, a new, very short period of history has occurred. During this time Mankind has evolved very rapidly in many ways. Evolution in the past has usually proceeded slowly in somewhat linear fashion since the first life. The word to note here, is slow. When evolution becomes too fast it can't keep up with itself. Changes occur faster than the species (and the world) can adapt to the change. The introduction of agriculture or the urban revolution are previous rapid changes that we now accept as being "good". Perhaps we have only forgotten or learned to ignore the pain; but our planet hasn't. Humans are quite an anomaly. We have learned to change fast; not so much in physical change as in the evolution of our technology and thought. By learning to achieve change outside of the physical sphere, we are no longer tied by biology. Our "mutations" are no
longer random. They are passed through communication instead of genes. We can undergo change in one generation that previously would have taken hundreds. There is no longer a control from nature.

This type of evolution creates a strange gap between the individual and the evolutionary process. The individual no longer has the greatest advance of evolution in his chromosomes. The greatest advance of mankind is some new machine that most of us don’t understand. It is separate from most of us: it may have been created by an individual, but it isn’t in every individual.

The same result comes from many of the specifics of our evolution. A long time ago, everything was made and done by people. From the primitive hut, to the pyramids and the gothic cathedrals, people’s touch and people’s effort could be seen in people’s work.
Technology has constantly been increasing. Particularly in the last few hundred years, with the industrial revolution, the initiation of mass production, and even more so with the coming of the electronic age, People's work has become abstracted. So many jobs are focused on intangibles such as the creation of media, communication, adjustment of numbers, or the moving of work that has already been done. The effect of this is to take away from one's concrete realization of one's value or use. In 1856, Karl Marx said, "All our invention and progress seem to result in endowing material forces with intellectual life, and stultifying human life into a material force."52 It is hard to have one's importance on earth be defined or tangible.

This lack of expression of the importance of the individual is very apparent in Architecture; in the method of production and in the expression of the method. The mass production mentality, with prefabricated parts created by machines doesn't give the builder any sense of craftsmanship, personal style, or even the necessity for expertise. The building will often look about the same whoever puts it together. This is a goal of new construction techniques.

The built work also does little to express the individual. The pieces are designed to express cleanness instead of craft. If one can see the thought or effort of the builder, it tends to be regarded as a mistake. The Gothic cathedrals are a testimony to the devotion, toil, and care of their builders. With many Modern and Deconstructionist buildings and perhaps all Post-modern

buildings, this is not the case. Richard Meier's white porcelain enamel and Graves' metal panels are designed to hide their connections, giving Meier's a pristine perfection and Graves' a sign-like quality in which the substance is what is applied to the building, instead of what the building is.

To show the individual that he does have some importance in the world, he must see evidence that people are not all the same and that they can have an effect, and that parts of life focus on, or at least recognize, the individual.

This may be mainly in response to Modern Architecture, but Post-modernism, and Deconstructionism both fail in aspects of this regard. Modern Architecture, forgot about the individual. Its machine ethic reflected construction not by men but by other machines. This interpretation may not be valid: it was built by people; but the expression worked to avoid showing it. Exceptions to this were brutalism, in which the rough concrete did try to explain from where it came, or Kahn's or Ando's visible form retaining clips, which if not explaining the concrete process at least gave some smaller scale.

Modern Architecture didn't express any difference between people; the mass production philosophy necessitated that all the units looked the same. The example of Le Corbusier's housing at Pessac where the residents added pitched roofs and chintz curtains visibly demonstrated the problems with this lack of differentiation. Corbusier's response to this: "You know, it is always life
that is right and the architect who is wrong.\footnote{Pierre Boudin, \textit{Lived-in Architecture}, trans. Gerald Onn, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1972, p. 1.} is an admission of his mistake. Even when the facts suggest one style or approach, the final answer must come from the psychology of the people who will be using the building.

The architect and the user must escape these problems at all steps in the building and inhabitation process. In the designing, any considerations or adjustments to accommodate the personality or use pattern of the inhabitant will be appreciated in symbolic and actual use value. This notion holds valid even if the building is sold and the new user has to live with a special adjustment made for the previous. Provisions that can be made to encourage personalizations by the inhabitants, like Charles Moore's shelves for displays of collections\footnote{Charles Moore, \textit{The Place of Houses}, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1974, 226-7.}, will help in the establishment of identity and pride.
This may seem to be forcing the inhabitant to do something that, if not natural, will be meaningless, but countless are the occasions when forced or at least encouraged effort or action later results in personal pride. In a few generations, perhaps this type of personal expression will be self-inspired in a larger part of the population. These ideas of accommodation of personal uniqueness must take place in terms of expression or appearance as well as actual use.

In the process of the design and building is a very real and effective opportunity for the individual to feel his effect. Christopher Alexander's on-site use of the client and users in the design process\textsuperscript{55} creates a great involvement and pride in the product while inspiring this feeling of having an effect or of not being "just a number". Charles Moore's description of his "take part" workshop, in which clients got together to express themselves and their desires, shows how well this can work to create an understanding, an appreciation, and a satisfaction in the client. This feeling will be reinforced each time the user uses or sees "his part" of the building. Equally good is the involvement of the user or anyone in the actual construction of the building. Using a building on which one worked allows one to continually be reminded of a connection with what is built. Working on the construction of any building will make one permanently more aware that buildings are built by people and not put there

magically. This may seem silly, but most people (not architects or builders) pass by buildings and see, not monuments to the creative ability of individuals working together, but just buildings.

This notion of involving the client or user in the design or construction of the building is a very good one. Alexander's description of the actual functioning of this process\textsuperscript{56} is quite inspiring. The problems, of course lie in the clients. Many people, for reasons of fear, lack of interest, or concern for the value of their time, will not become immersed in the building design process. They want the architect to design a building, or even a house, that is "good", without wanting to become overly involved. Hassan Fathy's description of his attempt to have people build their own houses in New Gourna, describes much of the resistance that people can have to this idea.\textsuperscript{57} This is not the way it should be, but it is the way it is. Methods that can show the work of others in the building or one's effect on it may work better for many clients.

Materials, details, and construction methods that show the "touch of man" go a long way toward dispelling the mystifying aspects of building, in a way that can be continually apparent. This can occur in the construction and in the inhabitation. Buildings that look perfect when built, and don't show the wear of human use, remove humanity's presence and imply a superiority to what

\textsuperscript{56} Alexander (1979).

\textsuperscript{57} Hassan Fathy, \textit{Architecture for the Poor}, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1973, pp. 149-182.
doesn't express man. It is like the difference between a well-seasoned cast iron skillet and a teflon pan, or a wooden chopping block, scarred and stained from many years of use and a corian counter which costs more because it will look like cheap, new plastic for as long as one owns it. The human touch, like brush marks on a painting are not weaknesses, but strengths. Signs of use, such as the wear on the stone steps of an old university's library, bring a profound awareness of, and connection to, other people from other times and perhaps can distance one from a feeling of being the only person who ever lived, or was in your situation . . . or mattered.

Some of these ideas are hard to put into operation because of economic considerations, people's lack of desire or skill to do work, or public feelings of contrary values. They have been seen attempted with mixed degrees of success in the work of Christopher Alexander, John Turner, and others. Much of the more successful self-built Architecture occurs without architects. Changes in people's ideas of what they want to do and what they prefer to hire other people to do will not come to everyone. A suggestion to a client that these ideas do exist and might be worth the extra money or a description of the way their benefits work may meet with some partial success. As history moves forward, some of people's ideas about values will change or mankind will destroy itself. Steps taken now, even by only a small part of the population will make things less miserable between now and then.
I have tried to show a way that Architecture's credibility could be returned to it, and a method for trying to bolster the individual's feeling of self worth, or at least not to continue to negate it; now it is important to describe a method that will imply or give an example of a way of living or a model of life.

These guidelines don't need to be and shouldn't be a strict prescription on the way to live. There just needs to be something that will imply an order instead of randomness. The important thing is for people to feel the way they are trying to live is a right way (to believe in their beliefs).

For people to believe and for these beliefs to function they must imply ways of life that sustain themselves. People can't believe in a "truth" that creates chaos or leads to mankind's destruction. They also must not lead to the domination of one group of people by another. People have learned from experience to be suspicious of other's use of representation for selfish ends; a system that empowers any one group will not work.

Nature (the world not dominated by people) and its ability to maintain itself is the perfect subject for this believable, but good, meaning. Its omnipresence and its non-power-hungry ways make it an ideal object for empowerment. Its installation as the new world-wide power regime will act with perfect equality to all peoples, forsaking only the deconstructable values that can't support life. This idea was expressed by the inventor of the term
"ecology" which he meant as "contextual biology". In the 1860's, Ernest Haeckel said, "if the laws of biology are followed, the result would be a humane, efficient, peaceful state."58 Mankind can be subjugated to the bigger picture in a way that will benefit everyone. Nature is not deconstructable. Its framing is inherent, and is of sufficient depth as to not deny its reality.59 "The fullness of nature—which includes human nature and language-exceeds language's capacity to report on her: this much Derrida shows us, as others have. Nature's


59 Can a frame that frames everything be deconstructable? I'm suggesting that the inherent reality of nature is deep enough. On a theoretical level, it can be denied as in the fashion of Zeno and many since, but in terms of reality and living life, the deconstruction of nature/reality seems unimportant.
own silence and loquacity exist on other, wordless planes. . . architecture, like
nature, surrounds, supports, and predates language. . . ”

This glorification of nature will occur in several ways. All building must
be done with increasing environmental mindedness. This not only means not
damaging irreplaceable features of the site, but also consideration for the
overall metabolism of the building, and the use of alternative energy forms. It
is far beyond the scope of this paper to describe these, but there are plenty of
books available on these topics. Important is not only to act on these items,
but also to represent them in an observable fashion. When undergoing a
pleasant, bloodless revolution, education is always the primary motivating
factor. Anything that can be done to let people see or know about caring for
the environment will help. At some stages, with some clients, it may be
necessary to only superficially act responsive, without actually being completely
metabolically non-damaging. This is okay. These things take time; the
important thing is to continually move in the right direction. If the architect
pushes it as far as possible, the public mindset will shift and the change in
lifestyle will follow. During the whole process there will be the secure
contentment of feeling there is a way, it is seen, and that is the direction the
world or at least oneself, is heading.

In addition to and no less important than the consideration of the
environment, is the increased expression and demonstration of the system of

nature and the way it behaves. The expression of nature’s behavior is easy. The biggest step may be to not display the opposite.

A building that denies gravity through a structural system relying on strange new aerospace materials or cleverly hidden supports shows man's domination of nature; an ingenious system that clearly shows the distribution of weight and the way it meets the ground is better. The best is a very boring system in which the lightest things are on top resting on the heavy things that rest on the ground. This last system shows, not domination by nature, but a working that is well within its confines. It also shows an acceptance of the system nature uses: stones on the ground, wood rising up, with the heaviest wood on the bottom and the lighter pieces on the top. It isn't a new way to do things, but an old way, which may be better.
Allowing people to experience true nature or even artificial nature is very important. A window looking out to a view or an area for gardening can create an opportunity for this. An area that will encourage being outside exposed to the breeze, smells, and sounds will do wonders for one's appreciation and understanding of nature's workings. Best, of course, is to leave the home and go out into the wild untouched nature. A little time in the wild can teach a lot of really pleasant stuff.

The most important but most difficult is to express the entire system of nature. The greatness of nature lies in its ability to function for everything acting within it. It must be balanced. Anything rising above soon falls hard. This notion is much-needed for operating successfully within the system of nature, and we don't have any other system within which to operate. Among people, the same system can function, while any other system can only be temporary. This is not to suggest that this is the only morally okay system, but it is the only one that has the Truth of permanence. We need a way of living that can function over time and that can have an appearance being the "right way" or of being "True". Interpreted a different way, nature could imply the morality of power and the survival of the fittest.61 This might work within the human race and it might become believable (although it would take a long time

61 This implication which has been suggested, is false; even Darwin has shown that species survival depends on mutual aid more than on competition. See Peter Kropotkin, Mutual Aid, A Factor of Evolution, New York University Press, New York, 1972.
to completely dispell current ideas of morals, but it could never work as a long
term method for the human race, which has to live on earth for the foreseeable
future. Mankind's ability to advance over other creatures on earth has put us
in a position of being able to dominate them, or to survive by being the fittest;
but we need other life to live. To maintain our life, not to mention our pleasant
life, we must consider the health of the entire planet. One step further can take
one to an idea of complete selfishness in which it doesn't matter what happens
to future people. But this loses even more chance of seeming like a morality
about which people can believe with conviction. People's love for their
offspring will not allow them to use up the earth without caring for future
generations.

As pointed out by Bill McKibben and many others, the earth's
environment is very worrisome condition. He suggests that some feedback
loops may have already begun to put the earth in a "endless cycle" of continued
warming. Continued lack of care will result in drastic and perhaps irreperable
climatological changes. The choice that many people will take is to let
everyone else take care of the world while continuing to operate on a selfish set
of morals. But this will make one more of a victim of increasingly fascist
controls created to enforce the care of our planet. Assuming a sufficient
majority will become enough aware of environmental problems to begin to
ennact legislation or to give power to the environmentally caring, there will

occur a tightening of strictures and controls by central force on both local and international levels. It may come to be the next justification for global hegemony. Whether one thinks it is morally important to care for the planet or not, the only way to survive into the future with no difficulty, pain, or sadness will be to accept and embrace this new morality for which the world has no other choice.

For the human race to continue living, it needs to achieve a morality of homeostasis within the world. To be happy, the individual has to become adapted to being content within this system instead of being dominated by it. To make all this occur smoothly, methods of representation have to be used to expose people to the pleasant ease of this system.

An effective method of expressing this idea of nature's balanced system
is difficult to employ purely through architecture. For the holistic qualities of 
nature to be effectively seen, it almost needs to be really seen. At the same 
time a display of or focus on some piece of it can increase awareness. Special 
functions for seeing some aspect of nature, like a rising sun window and a 
setting sun window, can bring attention to the whole thing. Peter Waldman's 
constant references to nature in a house for resisting hurricanes or windows for 
following the moon\(^\text{63}\) do this in a way that adds excitement to the house while 
pointing out the bigger world. Solar powered houses with huge south-facing 
windows remind one of one's place in the world's energy system while heating 
the house. These solar homes don't even need the angled shapes tracing the 
extact solar path to be effective in terms of energy or representation. Brise soleil 
that allows the winter sun in, while keeping the summer sun out can work in 
the same way.

Anything that represents a fitting in or adaptation to the world instead 
of the changing of the world to suit one's plan, is a valuable representation. 
Terraces or embedding in the slope is better than bulldozing a level pad in the 
site. Working around trees is better than cutting them down and then planting 
new ones. It may be noticed that these ways don't just represent a feeling 
about nature; they add excitement or life to a building while usually being 
cheaper. Like Kahn's idea that a building's form isn't right unless everything

\(^{63}\) *G.A Houses Special: The Emerging Generation in U.S.A.* ed. Wayne N.T. 
goes into it "easily and properly"\(^{64}\) maybe a form of life isn't right unless it functions easily and helpfully at all stages of its use. The form of life we have been using certainly doesn't succeed at this.

Another aspect of nature's system that may be hard to literally represent in a building, but which is vital to the meaning that must be expressed is the idea of stasis or timelessness.

\(^{64}\) Louis Kahn in *Light is the Theme*, p. 50, compiled by Nell E. Johnson, Kimbell Art Foundation, Fort Worth, 1975.
Nature, with its subtle undulations in power manages to maintain itself. The creation of feelings of new desires inspired by advertising and other forces has led people to constantly try to gain power in order to improve their lives through acquisition of the objects of these desires. Hegel's notion of a strife free world is not going to be accomplished, but any step that will lessen the intensity of the strife might make the world a nicer place in which to live. Anything that can express the long term instead of momentary desires may help create an attitude that will create less conflict. Something needs to express the fullness that it is just to live focusing on the delight that is available plentifully for all, without needing to change or gain. Nature is ideal for expressing this focus on the pleasures of the short term that will last for the long term.

After this long barrage of pro-nature proselytizing, I feel again the need to stress that this is not a casuistic diatribe prescribing "the moral way" to live. I don't really believe in Morality and don't suggest that you should either. The only feeling I'm really sure about is my desire to feel pleasure instead of pain. I have found it makes one's pursuit of this interest much easier if one has a belief about a way of life that one "knows" is True. It also helps if no one else is giving you pain or putting you in a position of dissatisfaction. The use of nature's homeostatic example combined with the reaffirmation of the individual's self worth can fulfill both these criteria. In the coming years, the importance of caring for or focusing on Nature will be constantly reaffirmed by
science, economics, and morality. This is certainly not the only way, and it
doesn't matter which way one chooses, but by being highly believable and
highly non-conflictual, this way might be the most effective way.
The Ballantyne house, designed by Karl Kamrath, is focused on the "nature" or landscape surrounding it. Its craftsmanship and detailing convey an understandability and a "touched-ness" that serves to draw the user into a loving dialogue among equals instead of creating a sense of alienation. The strong, but simple meaning of the house comes from a focus on the users, employing forms to evoke their memory and way of life.

The house is located on the outskirts of River Oaks, one of Houston's most wealthy, prestigious neighborhoods. Its street, Tiel Way, forms an uninterrupted loop off of Kirby and seems to have a removal from the focal
quality of much of the area. The street is heavily treed and follows the contours of the bayou, giving it a more enclosed, undulating feel that sets it off from the formal aspects of the rest of River Oaks.

Kamrath was given the opportunity to design two houses on neighboring lots on either side of a ravine leading down to the bayou, one for himself and one for the Ballantyne family. Both houses feature somewhat reserved street fronts with the primary focus being toward this ravine.

The house’s statement with regard to the surrounding landscape is multivalent, but clear and powerful. It manages to occupy a position focused on nature, but not dominant of nature.

Its large terrace projects out to the back, giving a feeling of being in
nature, but it doesn't steal the focus from the ravine. It invites leaving the deck and walking along the curving gravel paths, going further into the recesses of the yard.

The house is articulated as being separate from nature, with connections to it, instead of trying to be nature. It projects outward over the land, not touching it in places. The wall meets the ground back from the edge leaving a space that articulates what is house and what is ground. It is a mark of respect. The house shows we must live with nature, but not trample over it.
Mr Ballantyne is quite a gardener; well-cared for plants growing along the slope to the rear make it obvious that the grounds have been touched by human hands, but it isn't done in an insensitive way. The plants grow spread among the trees along the pre-existing slope of the land. They aren't enclosed or planted in rows. It demonstrates mankind working with nature, not molding nature to mankind.

The forms of the house seem shaped to fit in with nature; the horizontality of the decks, siding, and long, low hipped roof doesn't assert itself loudly over the ground.

The interior is calm and graceful, with a unified use of materials and details that fit together in scale and feeling. There is a lot of exposed wood used for ceilings, rafters, cabinetry, and window framing. Windows are abundant, but on the back side only, looking out to the views of the ravine, and heightening the house's focus on the landscape outside.
The house is centered on a core of concrete block that forms the fireplace and chimney. The rest of the house is made of wood projecting out in all directions. It has learned its form from that of a tree, its central trunk is rooted in the ground, with the house's wings extending outward. The projecting rafters are the ends of the branches sticking out over the ground. The house is not part of the ground, but rooted in it; not connected to the other trees, but living peacefully among them. This natural expression of the way the house rests on the ground gives it a feeling of permanence and rightness to its siting.

All the structure is very clear. One can see how it was put together even with very little knowledge of building. With the exception of sheet rock walls and carpet covered floors, all the materials can be understood as individual
pieces that were put together. The rafters show their fabrication from joined 2x lumber with visible bolts holding them together. The ceiling can be seen to be boards lying across the rafters. The window framing expresses joints and structure. One can see where the wood was cut and nailed. The core/chimney wall is made of concrete blocks laid so as to make a pattern, but with each block clearly expressed and with an appearance as to how the decorative effect was achieved. Decoration is primarily in the form of articulated structural members with paint to highlight their form. The lighting fixtures and to some degree, the railing and cabinetry are also used for integral, decorative focal points.
The decorative elements that aren't integral to the structure, such as the light hanging outside above the entry or the front door itself are very expressive of how they were created. They carry an obvious made-by-hand quality: strips of wood cut and nailed to the door in a pattern or cut and glued to form a light box. The design has a feeling of being someone's idea of what might look neat instead of a logic, a rigor, or a correctness.
Other aspects of the house reflect this overriding concern with real people instead of a theoretical validity. The organization came from Mrs. Ballantyne's concern with traffic patterns of her seven children and a desire to keep their passage from door to kitchen to bedroom out of her living room.

Special considerations for parts of their lives are what give the house its character. A projecting, sun-filled niche for the piano conveys this care. The eye-level shelf running the length of the hallway and backlit by windows under an overhang, give Mr. Ballantyne a place to display his rock collection. These things express that the house was made for specific people, with special personalities and traits that are important.
The overall form has already been described using an analogy from nature, that of a tree. It also could be said to come from a deep memory or feeling perhaps stored in people's instinctual ideas about a home. The low, wood house is centered around a taller, concrete core. This core is formed by the fireplace and chimney, a bench, and one wall. This core is the heavy, solidly rooted part of the house. One passes through or by this core when entering. Kamrath uses this heavy core to symbolize or express the heart of the house.
This core hearkens back to times when the home was centered around the fireplace for utilitarian reasons of heat, or even to prehistoric times of gathering around the fire at night. Certainly, a fireplace is rarely necessary in Houston for heat, so it isn't a theoretically valid notion, but in the psychology of people, which is where the real meanings lie, the notion of a hearth has a powerful even if outdated Truth. This poetic move is what pulls the house together into a powerfully expressed feeling of home.
The Chadwick house, designed by Carlos Jimenez, is sited in the Heights, an older neighborhood in Houston, that still retains the charm of the pre-airconditioning time of porches, overhanging eaves, and raised foundations. It is one of the rare neighborhoods in Houston in which one can find some degree of street life, or at least encounter people on their porch or walking down the street.

The Chadwick house stands in clear contrast to its neighbors in almost every way. The surrounding homes, not just on this street, but through most of the Heights, are low bungalows; the Chadwick house's three-story height is accented by the narrowness of its street face, giving it the look of a tower from
the front. The surrounding homes are fairly close to the street with porches establishing some sort of dialogue or "friendliness" with the public; the Chadwick house is set further back keeping it out of sight unless one is directly in front of it. The white wooden slats used for siding and the pitched, semi-gabled roof seem a gesture of acceptance to the neighborhood, but it is much too half-hearted to be effective. They are symbolic without carrying the spirit of the surroundings. Perhaps as the new paint job gains a little wear, some texture will result in the now pristine siding, but the small, high, funny gable, without rake eaves, will never reflect a community with the other houses.

Its geometric purity sets it apart from its neighbors in which projecting eaves, articulated volumes, porches, varied roofs, visible chimneys, and substantial entry coverings give a richness and lack of clarity to the overall form. This house has a very clear volume that Jimenez has made great effort not to violate. There is no front porch or front steps, only the most insubstantial, two-foot-deep symbolic canopy; a veritable sign saying entry without actually creating a "place" of entry. The windows and doors are as flush with the surface as could be managed, with thin white trim matching the siding. The rake eaves do not project at all. The gable eave projects about two-and-a-half feet to the rear, perhaps in an effort to create solar shading. In the front, the gable projects in a strange way that I have never seen before, slightly reminiscent of a New England barn gable used to raise hay, but unusual in Houston. These front and rear roof projections are at the top of a
three stories and are too slight to effectively break up the volume of the whole. The only oddity in the clarity of volume is on the side, a protrusion through the roof above the third story window, like a chimney with a hole in it. The porch, which should be in the front is in the rear and becomes an integral part of the big box. It is wrapped by screen and columns to deny its existence as a cavity, maintaining its coherency with the whole. The lack of articulations or "ins" and "outs" accent the overall volume but take away from the reality of the parts. The zero-depth windows and tacked-on entry canopy and gable eaves give the building a sort of paper-thinness with no apparenacy of mass.

This maintenance of the whole at the expense of the parts has several effects. It gives it an interesting, and perhaps attractive, though empty,
sculptural/visual quality. It denies the notion of the house being something that was put together from smaller parts, creating a mystery of construction instead of a reflection on how it was really built. It loses a lot in the way of permanence in its sitedness reflecting nothing of foundation or rootedness. It fails at touching one's memory: it doesn't feel like Architecture so much as sculpture or geometry.

Its irresponsiveness to the surrounding landscape in terms of nature is excusable; it is on a small Houston neighborhood lot with no topography and no real vegetation to which it could react. The two acknowledged existing trees were left intact. The house's failure to respond to the larger picture of natural functions is more reprehensible. It ignores the sun as a climatic condition. The house is a rectangular plan, longer in the North-South direction to fit on the narrow lot, thus maximizing solar heat gain in the Summer and minimizing it in the Winter. The one overhang on the South side doesn't project far enough to benefit any but the one window immediately below it. Jimenez has an interest in the changing effects of light passing through the spaces. This use of the sun as an artistic, rather than functionally effective, phenomenon is valid; it is a shame that it can't be made to perform in both ways.

Also, with respect to gravity, the house is not very expressive. The form is the same from top to bottom. It meets the ground the same way it meets the roof or meets the windows. It doesn't touch the ground in a natural way, but more like it was set down by a crane, "plop" on the ground. The sensitivity in
touching the ground, displayed so well in the Ballantyne house, seems to have been ignored here. The Ballantyne house responds to one's memory of "the way" things touch the ground, the way trees or mountains touch the ground, resting their weight on it, spreading out along it and over it. The Chadwick house isn't seen held above the ground on footings like its neighbors or going into the ground like a tree or stone. It is sitting on top of the ground ready to be moved or blown over. Certainly the space along the bottom can be hidden with planting, or perhaps one of those aluminum skirts, but it has lost a lot in terms of permanence or concreteness of presence.
The interior of the home is a bit more appealing: what is lost in terms of human responsiveness and memory is made up for in some ways by spatial excitement and a pleasant experiential quality.

The owner was very interested in security, so some of the enclosedness of the first floor can be attributed to this. The entry passes by the laundry room (two floors below the bedroom) and a low-ceilinged study/storage room lit by the burglar-barred doors under the porch overhang (shown here to unfair advantage by the flash camera). Up the stairs is the living area under a one-and-a-half-story cathedral ceiling and lit by a variety of windows. It is a large room of the type many people want these days. It is lacking in terms of human scale or defined places to sit or be. It is sized more for a party than for a single person.
Much of the house seems designed with too much care, losing a naturalness or responsiveness. The large nine-square grid of windows which looks on to the front yard becomes an art piece, expressive of formal geometry rather than human scale. The walls are all white sheet rock creating triangular shapes following the pitch of the roof. There is no feeling of reality or understandability to the materials used or the way they are put together, giving them a feeling of thinness. The room is almost complete without a dweller. A reflection of the owner in any fashion besides one or two modern art posters might begin to clutter the space.
On the same floor, in the rear of the building, is the kitchen area. The feeling is much more amenable to people due to the size, coloring, and spaces that can accommodate personal items that reflect real life. Moving from the too-large, white living space to the cozier, rosy glow of the kitchen made me glad to be in the kitchen. The owner concurred, saying that she did most of her living in the kitchen. The ceiling is made of plywood resting on closely spaced 2x12 joists on joist hangers. The pencil scribbles of the man who cut the lumber are still visible through the transparent, red stain. The owner implied that the Architect was forced to treat the ceiling this way because of her tight budget. This was fortuitous, in helping to create the most alive and most livable part of the house. The shelves over the counter allow a representation of what occurs there. The window and space in front of the counter seem a
comfortable and well-sized space to sit. Sadly, as we walked into the kitchen, Chadwick quickly adjusted one of the window blinds saying that Carlos wouldn't like it to be that way. Sounds like Mies and the Seagram building.  

The bedroom upstairs is under another pitched, white, sheet-rock ceiling and is quite cozy. The scale is nice for a bedroom with the low pitched ceiling feeling within reach and the space feeling somehow protectable. A closet wall with an inset window and seat that revealed its thickness adds to this feeling of protection or insulation from the outside.
On this day, the bedroom was quite hot. Chadwick had wanted a house that didn't always need air conditioning. This was apparently a new idea for Jimenez who put her bedroom just under the top of a three story continuous space with her bed under a fan that would blow the warmest layer of air down on her as she slept. Only one of the two south side windows in her bedroom is operable. She said that she had requested that both be operable, but that Carlos had been unwilling to put two double hung windows next to each other (apparently for aesthetic reasons). On the North end of the house under the gable is another small window operable by turning a crank with a ten foot stick.

The house has a pleasant spatial experience, walking from the cozy bedroom close under the pitched roof, down through the bright, open living
room, and into the warm, lived-in feel of the kitchen.

The house responds to some of the owner needs such as a feeling of security, but fails in others such as solar insulation and effective breezeways. Even the ability to walk from the bathroom to her bedroom without being visible from the street is lost due to the aesthetically motivated removal of a door at the top of the stairs. It is tragic that these basic and important functional needs were lost in the pursuit of sculptural or visual interests.

In terms of overall meaning the house fails on many levels. It has no
deep feeling of permanence or rootedness. It doesn't conjure feelings of home from one's memory. It doesn't express much that seems personal to the individual for whom it was built. It doesn't touch on much that is lasting, seeming at best to express the artistic whims of its designer. It fails to express any sort of care for, or connectedness to, the surrounding neighborhood and the rich expression of life that its homes convey.
Developer Home - Cinco Ranch

The home is located in Cinco Ranch, a development West of Houston. The "neighborhood" is made up of fairly similar homes all built in the late 1980's and early 1990's. (Many are still in the process of being built.) The area is far enough from central Houston to be isolated in terms of nearby neighborhoods or other human surroundings. The similarity of all the homes and the area's removal from other life give it a strong sense of identity or even closure.

In the typical developer fashion, the area was stripped of any existing topography or vegetation, to be relandscaped with the building of the homes. All the trees were recently planted. This gives the streets an incredibly empty or open feeling. There is nothing to break up the big sky except the roofs of the houses.
The houses show little consideration for the sun. The same standardized plan is used on different streets, in different orientations, without change. There is a reflection of gravity. Though in actuality no different from the Jimenez house, the houses manage to evoke a memory of the way buildings sit on the ground. They use extensive foundation planting in an obvious attempt to hide the exposed concrete at the bottom of the brick, but there is also the use of elements from previous times that cause a recognition of gravity. Most obviously, the use of brick speaks of weight and ideas of compressive support. The brick is used only as a veneer material applied to the wood frame structural system, but it hearkens back to a time when brick was structural and in so doing, gives a feeling of strength or solidity. Frequently, the brick is only on the front face of the home with visible, cheaper, wood or vinyl siding on the sides and rear. So, from the side, the brick is exposed as being, not integral, but a superficial facade material.
It is interesting, but this idea, which seems so obviously bogus to the architectural community doesn't seem to bother many of these home owners. Of the five or six couples I asked, this feature didn't seem odd in any way. They reacted to my question with varying degrees of defensiveness, but it clearly hadn't occurred to them that this detail belied the use of the brick as a structurally honest material. It seems that, to some people, this has come to be a standard or accepted way to build.

Arches over the windows, articulated keystones, and quoins at the corners are all useless or more difficult structurally, but like Mies van der Rohe's applied beams, they effectively convey ideas about weight and structure to minds less knowledgeable about actual engineering practice. I spoke to Barbara Brown, the architect for Perry Homes, one of the primary builders at Cinco Ranch. She said the goal was to create homes that seemed permanent and homey. Though somewhat different from my goals, one can see that these are things people want in a home and the homes succeed pretty well in this regard.

The houses are, of course, designed, not for a specific client, but for a projected buyer. In the area of Cinco Ranch visited, there was one builder and fifteen floor plans. The exterior image is varied slightly, but all staying pretty close to the current most popular image, which is now red brick, Georgian. It is an interesting image, which can be read more than one way. On one level, presumably the one that the buyers read, it gets away from the modernist mass
production methodology in which all the units were identical. It expresses an individual home for each family with a place for the family to grow and live as a unit. Another reading is that the families are living in mass production houses with no special considerations for the particular family. The uniqueness or "specialness" of each family is an illusion supported by nothing real. It seems that from some contemporary philosophical positions, this second reading would be the most straightforward expression possible, certainly more so than deconstructionist buildings that ignore the truth of the existence of the lie.

It scares me to think of the dual and contradictory possibilities of the reading. I hate to fall into the depths of the Venturi snide architects club taking pleasure in our ability to have a joke at the masses' expense, seeing that they are missing the most valid reading. And yet, the value of expressing "home" or permanence in a language that can be understood is worthwhile. Words do not become useless when their source is no longer current; in fact, it is the memories stored in words that can give them an added richness. Whoever can see, or can't avoid seeing the irony of anything that expresses individual worth today, might see it in one of two ways. Those that are focused on the good of the user will see it as expressive of a tragic sadness in the world today, and will see the benefit in reinforcing what helps give meaning, instead of what takes it away; those that are focused on their elite club of fellow intellectuals will take great pride in their ability to make jokes at the public's expense.

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The important thing is the reading taken by the people who live there and apparently, as indicated by the number of sales and the enthusiastic praise given the homes by many of their residents, the homes succeed pretty well from that standpoint.

The homes are not designed for specific individuals, but they are designed very carefully for people. The competitive market for new homes has driven builders to great lengths to determine what is wanted. Surveys are continually taken and studied by the builders to determine what pleases. They attempt to build homes fitting the public's image of what a home looks like. Details, such as keystones are thrown in for accent, but people do seem to accept them, and sometimes even deeply appreciate them. It is hard to accept at times the banality and obviousness of what they desire. The phony details function on a symbolic level and the symbols have not lost their power despite having lost the facts to support them. I asked the architect if ornament was crime. She said that ornament is what makes people happy.
The interiors are also designed to please, though in some ways it seems they are focused more on instant than lasting appeal. Mark Kaufman of Kaufman Meeks Architects is quoted by Joel Barna as saying, "We have found with first time buyers that an emotional rather than functional choice is made. Whatever has an emotional impact (cathedral ceilings, large glass areas, good sized kitchens) will sell... quickly"\(^{67}\) So the homes are filled with these things. Often they seem more like collections of individual treats than a coherent whole. The kitchens are always beautiful, large and well-lit with adjoining breakfast niches surrounded by windows. The living rooms are large with cathedral ceilings or double height spaces. Master baths are very large with his and her dressing spaces and incredible tubs. Pet peeves from previous houses, such as not enough closet space, are always well-provided for.

\(^{67}\) Joel Barna, *The See-Through Years*, unpublished manuscript, p. 74.
It is with mixed feelings that these are pointed out. They seem like little selling features instead of things of a deeper value; but on the other hand, the Chadwick house didn't have enough closet space and she will have to live without it. As she is walking with her laundry up the two flights of stairs (both without rails) to her bedroom, she may wish a satisfaction survey had been taken on hundreds of other houses with plans like hers (or at least that her architect had considered their value). The houses may not be designed specially for the personality of the one client, but they are designed to be special to anyone. The "special" features, like a little curved window in a gable, a bench in front of a window, effusive moulding, a chandelier, or a bay window are easy to spot. Yet, these features may have a specialness to them. It may drift as these people visit their neighbors and see everyone has them, or maybe they will think the whole neighborhood is special. People outside of the architectural community do not see these things as strange, or applied, or "thrown in".
The craftsmanship of these homes is an interesting mix of high quality and complete lack of expression of care. The homes looked at (obviously in the higher price range) were crafted flawlessly. There were no gaps around the windows or in the trim; cabinets opened and closed with great precision; floating and painting was perfect; everything was square. The care put into designing in a modular, waste-free fashion added to this feeling of everything being just right. Yet it feels so lifeless. There is no expression of craft. Any opportunity for the worker's work to be seen is carefully avoided. The attempt to create this look of perfection necessitates the elimination of any opportunity for a mistake to be seen. All nails and screws are hidden. All joints are covered with trim. Every visible connection is mitered as if by the hand of God. It feels strange. One could live here forever without ever thinking about it being put together by people. There is no expression of real structure. The framing is all carefully covered with sheet rock in the interior and on the exterior with brick laid with a straightness and evenness of mortar width that defies the imagination of a summer bricklayer.
All wood is without flaw (at least on all exposed surfaces). Somehow the evenness of its staining and treatment makes one fail to identify it with wood, the natural stuff out of which trees are made. The house falls between the Ballantyne house and the Chadwick house: In some ways, like the Ballantyne house, it has reflections of the traditional, carpenter oriented ways of making connections and showing details; but it does these things without actually letting them show the carpenter’s touch. This is similar to the Chadwick house, which doesn’t express the touch of the carpenter either symbolically or actually. (except in the kitchen)

The expression of the house as a representation of a built achievement depends on the viewer. It can express nothing, which is what it is intended to express. Or from a closer, more cynical examination, it expresses the reduction of the workers to machines that can do the same thing over and over without letting themselves show, and the house as being one product of an assembly line of these house producing machines.

So the houses are good and bad. Designed and produced by people who don’t want to spend a penny on what won’t be tangibly (monetarily) appreciated, for clients who don’t want to see mistakes, they express accurately some of the values of Western culture which are often better not to see. And yet, mercifully and conveniently, this meaning isn’t seen. As shown in Learning From Las Vegas68, another meaning of permanence, value, and "home" is

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68 Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour (1977) p. 128-134.
expressed symbolically using dumb, obvious symbols from past homes. It is similar to advertising. The reality (quality) is ignored; the image or symbol of quality is what the people look for and pay for. It isn't misrepresentation; the people want to spend their money on something they will feel is of worth and the image is used to give this to them. By carefully, scientifically, focusing on the people who will be living in them; by looking to see what, perhaps illogical or outdated, things make up these people's dreams, the developers are giving the people their dream home. The homes are pathetically insensitive in many basic ways and yet in others, are far more sensitive than many of the homes designed by architects.
Conclusion

I went into this feeling a lot of things strongly, and thinking I had a pretty good idea where the problem lay. After further study on the way my feelings could be put into practice and after much exposure to Richard's constant devil's advocacy: "You sound like Hitler." "You sound like Prince Charles." "You sound like a Baptist preacher." My conclusion is that the problem is an exceedingly difficult one.

Each solution, of course, carries a variety of problems with it. Each meaning has its aspects of dominance, naivete, or negativity. The multiplicity of goals desired by clients refutes any totalising plan.

Clients are the real problem. Without them, it would be a lot easier. This can be seen by the success of much "project" Architecture in school or on the lecture circuit. Many houses aren't bought with the hope of improving the world or even one's life. They are bought as investments or status symbols, or as comfortable shelter for the least money possible. Many of the people who hire architects, and knowing this is what many architects will give them, want their house to be art. One of the houses I considered including as a case study was Peter Waldman's Wetcher house in Clear lake. It doesn't do many of the things I have been advocating and yet, is clearly a succesful house in terms of pleasing the clients and, I hope, in improving their lives. Presumably what the clients wanted, and certainly what Peter gave them is an intensely meaningful
and artistic home; so meaningful, that I don't think I could live in it, but I imagine the Wetchers will be delighted to live in it. To tell the Wetchers they need a house that allows more empty space for their own free expression, or a house that doesn't reflect the design ideas of the architect, or that the house should be a primordial expression of home instead of an art piece in which to live, would be a mistake. I imagine they knew what they were getting and will be overwhelmingly pleased. But it would be unfortunate if artistic designedness was assumed to be the only thing architects did.

Many people are concerned about the cleanness or perfection of the craft in their house. An expression of human foibles would seem an unfortunate mistake and nothing more. To insist that they need carpenter's scribbles on their joists to improve their lives would be unfortunate.

Many, if not most of the houses bought today are bought perhaps primarily for monetary reasons, as an investment and as a way to avoid paying rent. This being the primary desire in a house necessitates a different approach to designing it. Houses like the Wetcher house or the Ballantyne house are terrible for resale. Expression of the specific individual takes away from universality of appeal to a potential buyer.

When educating a client, the architect needs to be very careful. Alexander and Moore work to educate the client so they can make their desires
known. Le Corbusier wanted to educate his clients (and the world) so they would desire the same things he did. The architect has specialized knowledge, that should be used to make wiser decisions, but education must be carried out in a non-condescending way, trying to find the user's desires, perhaps that aren't even known or understood, but not trying to change them. As Corbusier said later, "it is always life that is right and the architect that is wrong." Trying to explain to the world why my way of living is better and then putting them in the appropriately designed house won't work. Expecting a revolution to occur because I think I've discovered the problem, is naive to say the least. William Morris thought he saw the way and was heartbroken when his prescribed revolution in attitudes didn't occur.\(^{69}\) Problems or perceived problems in attitudes exist, and must be accommodated, not retrained. Trying to influence by speaking or writing on "the way" is great, but inflicting it on people is a mistake. Geoffrey Scott praises Ruskin's view "that the arts must be justified by the way they make people feel."\(^{70}\) Corbusier's problem may have been the individuality of people; Morris' was the lack of individuality in people. Either way, the client is right and the architect must make the client feel good about living in the home for which he or she has paid.

These facts about clients and differing desires do not refute totalizing solutions; they only refute their totality. William Morris' solution was correct

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\(^{69}\) Stansky (1985) p. 265.

\(^{70}\) Scott (1924) p. 106.
and had benefit; so, perhaps was Corbusier’s. The fault occurs when these solutions become total, applied without regard for the particular inhabitant.

If the architectural profession is not to be continually excluded from the vast majority of new homes built, the desires and needs of the client must be accommodated, not just the momentary satisfaction with the "look" upon moving in, but with issues that will continually affect the use of the home over the years. A home that looks great, but is hot because of misplaced windows, isn't going to inspire a feeling of having gotten one’s money's worth. It is hard to design homes that are exciting enough to put in magazines that still work for the client at every level; and, it is somewhat more difficult for the person looking at the magazine to analyze this functional working of a house than it is to see the visual excitement in one, but the satisfaction of art without functionality will make the architect useful to only a small part of the population.

I have arrived again at an obvious notion with which most of us would agree; that being the need to find out what the client wants and to try to satisfy these desires. It seems that the crucial focus of this polemic may be in the minds of the architectural community. We have been drifting away from the ability, or perhaps desire, to create Architecture that communicates beneficial meaning to the people. The architectural community's focus on the intellectual side of Architecture makes it somewhat difficult for architects to confidently
pursue a non-intellectual architecture. It is almost like the parable of the emperor's new clothes in which anyone who can't see the non-existent clothes is labeled a fool. The nakedness of the architectural profession lies in the failure to be worth the money to most people; and the non-existent clothes are the hard to understand ideas on which so much study is based, to the partial or complete exclusion of other equally important ideas. This is not to suggest a problem with the study of these things, but the scoffing or discounting of other, non-intellectual, ecological, or people-focused architecture is a big mistake.

It is hard to know how to change these attitudes. Certainly, publications will tend to focus on what is new and exciting instead of what is best. This is a symptom of the problem more than a cause. Winners of awards and competitions are also very much a result of what the elite currently espouses. The cure lies with the individual; meaning professors, practitioners, students, and clients. The key is to escape in one's own mind the unquestioning acceptance of what is new and exciting, or valid, or philosophically interesting as being good. Deconstructionism and Post structuralism are methods for doing this, but when one becomes so enchanted with the idea of Deconstructionism, or worse, the look of Deconstructionism that one forgets the meaning of Deconstructionism, it doesn't lead to good architecture. If one can filter each idea through a set of criterion as to what makes Architecture good, one can learn to resist the instant adoption of some of these trendy ideas that seem to
have such importance. Primary among these criterion should be an examination of the architecture’s effect on the people using it.

The architectural profession needs to increase its validity or worth to future clients; expressing confusing intellectualism won’t achieve this. The world needs to live in a way that will maintain the healthy happy existence of this planet and its users; the meaning of deconstructionism in architecture won’t imply this way of life. Clear meaning for both the architect and the client should become both the means and the ends of the architectural endeavor.