The discipline of architecture has a dubious reputation among other disciplines — as an arena where self-validating criteria perpetuate arguments of self-importance. This is reified through the ideological premise of “architecture for architecture’s sake”. Architects caught up in the pursuit of a pure architectural expression have been known to go so far as to completely denounce program, function, purpose, and site; i.e. all practical measures. When seen through the eyes of modern architects, the unconventional and unnatural forms expressing this ideological construct are often considered sacrosanct, so much so that architectural academia, today’s design industry, and Western media seek to sanctify its image as a visual commodity.

So unusual are the aberrations of fashionable architecture that many are fooled into believing that what they are seeing is a genuine advancement in architectural thinking. Unnatural in appearance as they may be, images of such fashionable architecture circulate the globe, establishing, legitimizing, and forging a cryptic language of design. As a result, the obscure ideas that accompany these forms have been institutionalized in the modern education of an architect without question. To support what can only be described as an aesthetic ideology, the modern institution of architectural education has spent the past several decades insulating itself by way of its own internalized valuing system. This intellectual isolation has bred an exclusive community of like-minded designers who would rather pursue a purely aesthetic expression of the built world than ever consider any practical measure or intelligent construct that the natural universe might hold.

By removing genuine architectural knowledge from the architecture curriculum, academics are better able to propagate their baseless theories, indoctrinating defenseless students into their own peculiar ideologies. To affect this shift in thinking, architecture schools that were originally a part of the College of Engineering began to distance themselves from the measures of applied science and the scrutiny of more practically-minded people. They therefore either joined the College of Art, or became administratively independent altogether. Since their course structure was no longer that of schools teaching applied science, it became very easy to debase the intellectual level and course content.

Practical students tend to go into the sciences and engineering, whereas today’s architecture schools attract those students that would rather invent without consequence or limit. The freedom inherent in this educational model often attracts challenged or somewhat dysfunctional students by ostensibly promising four years of arts and crafts cloaked with a pseudo-philosophical mystique. True, at some point
students are given impossible tasks that require they stay up working all night. This “initiation” satisfies them psychologically, making them think they are really doing something. Through this experience, erroneously termed “design rigor”, students can easily become convinced that what they are doing is truly important, valid, and real. The lack of sleep that such exercises require enables the process of psychological conditioning and thus perpetuates the deception of these dysfunctional design methods. This process is further reinforced by the architectural media’s celebration of starchitects (i.e. those individuals that have been allowed to express their unbridled “will to form” in perpetuity), and their buildings with everlasting shiny titanium panels.

This hoax, which has befallen the modern world of design, has at its core a self-validating ideology of superficiality and pseudo-intellectualism. We believe this model of design to be unintelligent, unsustainable, and at times unscrupulous. We also believe that, with time, this artificial process will ultimately reach its own natural limit. Our concern is what might occur in the vacuum created when the current system of beliefs collapses from its own irrelevance. It is time to begin a conversation with today’s students to explain some of the particulars, as we see them, about the architectural establishment’s support for the current crop of illustrious starchitects. Today’s prize-winning architects appear to be principally interested in fame and profits, and are apparently willing to create a twisted world for everyone else to live in just to achieve their goal. This includes writing baseless, nonsensical, texts and talking prattle to justify their otherwise absurd buildings.

If these buildings were fine for human use, then it wouldn’t matter what the architect utters, but many contemporary “showcase” buildings are in fact dysfunctional, and often require an extensive and purposefully baffling narrative to defend their existence. We not only blame these starchitects for their work — but equally the clients who actually commissioned it. There is certainly something ethically, if not morally, wrong with selling a defective product, even if that is permitted in the amoral view of how capital markets work. Architecture students and young designers should know that users might eventually outgrow their dependency on image-based designs, realize the deception, and stop commissioning non-adaptive buildings (it hasn’t happened yet, but there is ample reason to believe it is on the near horizon).

What is alarming is that the intellectual dishonesty begins at the very top of the profession — with some of today’s most famous architects — and permeates without resistance down into the hallowed halls of architectural academia. Lacking a solid rational basis as a discipline, architecture is exposed to the personal whims and political ambitions of its key players. These power games define the system’s intellectual elite and prescribe its misguided logic. We refer to this condition as “the politics of architectural discourse”. There is purposefully no system of checks and balances, such as occurs in disciplines with a solid knowledge base like the sciences.

Politics may play out in academic scientific departments, but the core body of knowledge survives those conflicts, and is transmitted to the younger generation. Architecture removed this guarantee when early modernist ideologues, such as the Bauhaus, scrapped the discipline’s inherited knowledge, relegating the study of
historic forms of architecture to the Fine Arts. The teachers of this new modernist ideology then took over both architectural education and practice worldwide, resulting in their resounding personal success at the expense of the entire discipline.

Overturning architecture's prior dependence on the natural aspects of materials and methods, formalistic arguments were substituted in place of direct observation. The Bauhaus, for example, studiously developed design techniques that REMOVED natural geometrical qualities from built structures. While Bauhaus readings might suggest that their design philosophy stemmed directly from nature as a source of design inspiration, the unnatural quality of their designs belies any such claims. Within the paradigm of the Machine-Age Design (MAD) thinking, instituted by the Bauhaus teachers, new ways of teaching and evaluating the work of architecture students and practitioners created the basis for what was to come — a descent into self-congratulatory sycophancy.

Architectural academics have long utilized clever propaganda ploys in shaping students' minds. They publish collections labeled as “Essential Readings in Architectural Theory”, which are then used to teach entire generations of architecture students. The deception consists of two tactics: (i) proclaiming ideology as “theory”; and (ii) presenting the views of trendy contemporary architects and ideologues, with just one or two honest authors thrown in. This token gesture of inclusion is essential for misrepresenting the book as an unbiased selection, meant to educate students through broad exposure to different viewpoints. You will often hear architectural academics refer to this type of teaching as pluralism. The preponderance of text in such books, however, is self-serving and/or irrelevant. The early, “historical” section is oftentimes limited to the Bauhaus authors — nothing before that; little or nothing outside the closed confines of the industrial aesthetic; little or nothing about the vast building heritage of humankind.

Turning to an analogy from history and politics helps us understand this phenomenon better. The removal of inherited architectural knowledge (i.e. the history of architecture prior to the industrial revolution) also removes the conditions for loyalty to the discipline. There is nothing left to be loyal to — other than individuals (i.e. starchitects) or an ideology — and thus the door opens wide for opportunism and systemic corruption. Abusing the democratic process, a small elite gained power, confined rewards and privileges to its own members, and set up a framework (or commandeered an existing one) to protect its power base. Mechanisms for accountability were then diligently abolished. Loyalty is no longer towards the discipline, but only towards the controlling elite.

A larger entity to which people owe true loyalty is always defined by some solidly-established historical ideals. In the cases where those ideals have evolved from the ground up, the situation is humanly healthy. Those foundations lend systemic stability, which in turn permits disagreements, innovation, and debate while preserving the sanctity of the discipline itself. Any loyalty to an elite, self-assumed valuing system, however, is misfounded and delusional.

Collective research into the dimensions of human perception has recently derived the most immediate measures of architecture and design, as these relate to the
human experience. When considering what it is to be human, and what it is to operate in the physical world that surrounds us, science now evidences the precursory role that the human mind plays in perceptual (i.e. neuro-physiological) engagement with the built environment. From research in neuroscience, Evidence-Based Design, and Biophilia, etc., we have been able to clearly establish intelligence-based criteria for architecture, which reveal the ineffective dimensions of modernist design. To our dismay, but not to our surprise, we are now witnessing what appear to be the dubious efforts of architects to co-opt our own research and work, and that of our colleagues and friends.

Cunning members of the current “establishment” realize that a major new market is developing, and wish to “ride the wave” and establish yet again another monopoly (i.e. a continuation of the old modernist monopoly). Those individuals are beginning to embrace our vocabulary and ideas, but only to subvert them so as to bolster their own heroes and ideology. Others shamelessly appropriate our ideas as their own, and use them in self-promotion. Architectural academics lecture on mathematics and the new sciences applied to architecture; on algorithmic design, adaptivity and sustainability, nature and the human dimension, the sacred aspects of built form, etc. Such efforts are dishonest when judged by their concluding theme: they promote the same set of nihilistic architectural heroes. Appropriating the ideas of an intelligence-based design in order to twist them to opposite ends is simply an exercise in dishonesty and deception.

Even allowing for temperamental differences between artists and scientists (and treating architects as artists, which is the way they prefer it), the behavior of some of the Western World’s key architectural figures tends to be rather sordid. Their lives and actions are marked by dishonesty and a lack of professional ethics and personal morality. No comparable behavior is to be found among, say, famous doctors throughout recent history. Famous architects court unsavory powers and regimes in search for commissions, apparently not bothered by any moral conscience. Worse of all, such historical facts are suppressed by architectural academia, which is complicit in covering up the ugly deeds of its famous names. By presenting these individuals as models, architectural academics have propagated a great lie onto their students and throughout the world.

Contemporary architecture has become an esoteric language, framed within a self-perpetuating argument then rolled into an ideology, which sits above reason and rational purpose. At the heart of its argument is the appropriation of all ideas and information through an aesthetic paradigm. For architecture in all its forms (from mere shed to great cathedral) to truly sustain humanity, it must be fundamentally based on structural principles found throughout the physical universe. It must also be supplemented with a deep understanding of what it is to be human: of human needs, activities, and perceptive (i.e. neuro-physiological) mechanisms. Students should know that while contemporary architects continue to fool themselves into believing that philosophy or ideology can substitute for these requirements, engineers and other construction professionals are bypassing this inefficent architectural philosophy. Non-architectural construction and design firms are capitalizing on the
architectural elite’s inability to work through realistic problems, leaving architects with less and less work to do.

As we structure a new model for the future, it is important that we set forth on the work-to-be-done with a newfound (or rediscovered) paradigm. This paradigm reveals a greater concern for the workings of the human mind than in the formal ordering systems the twentieth century allowed. Beyond the party line of the tabula rasa, this new approach seeks to leave in place those elements and structures that imbue the built environment with a morphology that respects both time and space, both history and phenomenology. If indeed the profession develops into a new type of practice, it will sponsor forms of design that spring from existing conditions and traditions to render ever-greater expressions in the work of multi-cultural world architects and urbanists.

The future opens up exciting possibilities for training a new generation of architecture students beyond the conditioning of modernist architectural systems. We are calling for nothing less than a fundamental change to the discipline’s basis. We do not expect that the changes we are suggesting will be immediately embraced and applied unilaterally throughout the academic and professional institutions of architecture around the world. But we hope that those among us who have the passion, courage, and vision to see a better way will begin to reconstruct the study and practice of architecture. Utilizing an intelligence-based form of design to construct a new world not only offers a truly human dimension to the built environment; it also folds together and inherently validates all other cultural forms, traditions, and sensibilities. We need only look around us to see that the dominating iconic forms of the reigning model, by contrast, serve solely to disrespect all architectures and cultures of the world except their own.

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**BIOGRAPHIES**

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