

Architectural Praxis

I

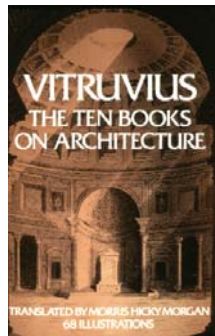
We must stop treating theory as separate from action and start to understand theory as part of action ordering and thinking

PRAXIS

Although lettering is thought to have emerged into the lives of human beings around 9K years ago it was not until 2K years ago that we produced the first text book in architecture based on Greek work and very early Roman building requirements. It was a bit of engineering and a bit of building regulations as well as a bit about building nice buildings

Vitruvius categorised architecture under three sub-headings

- Firmness
- Commodity
- Delight



It was not until 1450 years later that Leon Battista Alberti, a Florentine, from Florence in Italy, produced *De Re Aedificatoria*, published later in 1486, after Alberti's death. It was not produced in English until 1726 by a team of interpreters under the direction of Leoni.

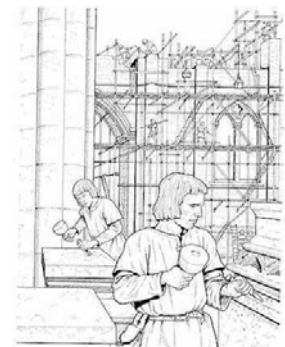


See Alberti L B, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Rykwert; Leach; Tavernor, Cambridge Massachusetts; London, MIT Press, 1999

We shall consider Architecture as treating the Quality of the Built Environment so that the designer integrates qualities of firmness, commodity and delight and is called an architect in the case of building a people - environment.

This poses some profound problems because we must shift our attention from the problems of designing a building to that of quality management and trans-disciplinarity (part of the division of labour).

One myth about the emergence of the job of architecture is that the architect's role emerged out of the job of the stonemason as the master builder or inspector of works.



Alternatively the story is that the architect is able to be better informed and better educated than the workers and more able to talk to clients and users



It is possible to agree to both of these statements,

1. that the architect needs to know a lot about the construction of buildings and its manifestation in working practices



2. That the architect must appreciate what the clients and users of a building might find appropriate in the finished project

But there are still problems with quality that emerge when we consider humanity as a whole rather than just those human beings building and using a building! This is the point of cultural context.



Was Vitruvius right about what architects do?

Engineers now look after the **firmness**/soundness of our built environment

Quantity surveyors look after the **commodity** value of our built environment

And architects?



Architects may contribute in ways that are difficult to relate to any sense of order



For years successful architects have been delighting clients and specific users while less 'successful' architects have been promoting ideas that work by appealing to some concept of humanity as a whole.

Cedric Price (right) produced a number of works of a speculative nature that were designed to allow large numbers of people to use them as part of their personal activity that was not ownership or work based





“I went a-preaching Stepney way* and I can tell you: it is a great drawback that I can't talk to them roughly and unaffectedly, you see this great class gulf lies between us all”

* East End of London



“they are good fellows enough and have only to be got to listen to reason”



lovely



Morris married a working class woman whose appearance delighted him and who was willing to be dress the way he liked



“Let's break out of the horrible shell of wisdom and throw ourselves like pride-ripened fruit into the wide, contorted mouth of the wind! Let's give ourselves utterly to the Unknown, not in desperation but only to replenish the deep wells of the Absurd!”

Manifesto of Futurism

