

Changing the way you design – Generational Shift



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Architecture occupies a peculiar place in the life of democratic societies. Most buildings get built because some private concern, an individual or a corporate entity, commissions it. Because procuring land and constructing buildings is expensive, the private concerns that do so typically enjoy the benefits of wealth, which include social and political influence in excess of the democratic credo of one man, one vote. Yet architecture, or most of it anyway, is a *public* good: what any one person or institution builds, others must live with, and often for a very long time. This situation surely produces buildings that reliably serve clients' interests, but less reliably serve the public. How to shift the balance of power so that the rest of the world get buildings and places that are good for them too?

This is a question that most designers tend to keep under the covers and in the long run forget to ask themselves. We spend more than 5 years studying and gathering up all we know to face the world and in between tend to lose out on some valuable lessons- "Fighting for what you believe in and making it happen". Once outside the curriculum, the clients dictates and we follow.

Apart from that, the greatest challenge for architecture in the 21st century is merging the techno sphere of our creation with the biosphere of our inheritance. As an architect, part of this is honestly dealing with a 'ruined landscape' that has for centuries sought to 'conquer nature'; part is in dealing with the cultural, political, and industrial 'burdens' that are reminders of our delusional quest for homogeny.



As designers and engineers we have a greater responsibility, than just fulfilling our client's demands, one towards the public. One that we should keep in mind whether what we build is big or small. For example, when one designs a mall, it should be a place for the people, one which the people could enjoy and blend in. A large chunk of mass with as many retail units it could fit is not what the world needs. Ultimately it's that drive or the push that we are all after. The wishes of every client is sacred, but then we should question our self - should we be calling our self a designer if we are not cut to put our signatures on it?

The questions still remain, how do we change or shift the power, how do we influence our clientele to follow our perspectives. While there is no out right answer to it, the possible solution lies within the designers. Change our attitude, this in turn will change our perspectives. The search for answers always lead back to our roots. Let's ponder why the great masters or as we call them, the pioneers built spaces within the nature, and not over them. Why Louis Kahn left large glaring openings in the IIM facades, or why F L Wright chose to build the house over the



stream, or why Corbusier chose to have a park in each sector. We all know it had to do more than just the aesthetics, it was about how the people inhabiting, would perceive the spaces. And it is here, at this juncture we realise why they are called the Masters- however the design maybe, they managed to convince their clients.

There is generally a time when one set of pioneers fade away to give way for the next generation. The likes of Kahn, Corbusier, F.L Wright could be said to have passed on to today's pioneers, Norman Foster, Koolhaas or Zaha Hadid. If we observe close, there is revolution in the architectural fraternity once again.

The next generation is taking over the baton, leading towards a new style or trend in architecture. The signs of a seismic generational shift may be subtle and, for now, escape the notice of the larger public. But they are there and they herald a move away from architecture as expensive visual statements that are unsustainably large and challenging to maintain. To be an architect during this shift is one thing, but being a part of the shift lies in each of our hands.

Enthusiasm for large-scale statement architecture may have reached a breaking point. And the timing couldn't be better for the rising young architects who have already moved away from the idea of architecture as big shapes and spaces. And this "moving away" is the answer that our pioneers figured out in their times- that the space matters more than the mass.

