▇ Can Architects Be Socially Responsible?

Margaret Crawford

As individuals, most American architects sincerely assert that they are deeply concerned about issues of social and economic justice. Yet, over the past twenty years, as a profession they have steadily moved away from engagement with any social issues, even those that fall within their realm of professional competence, such as homelessness, the growing crisis in affordable and appropriate housing, the loss of environmental quality, and the challenge posed by traffic-choked, increasingly unmanageable urban areas. What accounts for this enormous gap between individual concern and professional indifference? The answer to this question can be found in the nature of the profession itself. Modern professions, rather than simply existing as the sum of the professional interests of their individual members, instead are complex social constructs that structure their autonomous identities in relation to the specific configuration of the economy and society in which they operate. Successful professional identities depend as much upon devising convincing ideological representations of professional practices as on the actual practices themselves.

The architectural profession's attempts to operate within both economic and social constraints and to fashion a successful identity have been complicated by a series of contradictions unique to the profession. Even a superficial examination of American architecture's professional structure over the past one hundred years reveals a history littered with an accumulation of unresolved contradictions, as virtually every observer of the field has noted.[1] This suggests that the current gap between individual concern and professional inertia represents a contemporary reformulation of a persistent barrier between the needs of professional identity and the demands of social responsibility. Recognizing this, the current impasse needs to be addressed as much as a historical legacy as a contemporary dilemma. Only by untangling this web of contradictions can the profession start to address and formulate a professional identity compatible with the social and economic needs of American life.

The Professional Problem and the Ideological Solution

During the late nineteenth century, American architects fresh from European educations undertook to restructure the ancient activity of building into a modern profession able to meet the social and economic requirements of an advanced capitalist economy and a liberal state. The efforts of architects were part of a much larger American movement toward professionalization, in which an educated middle class increasingly established a "monopoly of competence" by claiming exclusive rights to previously unregulated activities. This professional project depended on two separate but closely linked goals: first, the definition and control of a protected market for professional services, and second, the assurance that membership in the profession would provide both social status and visible economic advantages.[2]

Architecture followed medicine, law, and engineering in pursuing these goals through institutional structures. The American Institute of Architects (AIA), founded in 1857, provided the organizational basis for professionalization efforts. Significantly, it was initially constituted as a gentlemen's club, where shared cultural conventions rather than techniques served as the initial means of separating "architects" from others in the building field. The diploma and the license created exclusionary competencies requiring formal education and a credentialing process. Professional schools, such as the ones at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1868) and Cornell University (1871), defined and standardized knowledge. A legal definition validated by the state was provided through a licensing requirement based on a professional examination, instituted first in Illinois in 1897 and subsequently in other states. Licensure, however, did not allow architects to control all building: their domain was limited to large buildings such as churches, apartment houses, and public structures.[3]

By the beginning of the twentieth century, architecture existed as a profession, a credentialed elite legitimized through conventional procedures established by other professions. In spite of these institutional achievements, architecture, unlike other professions, failed to satisfy many of the underlying social assumptions necessary for successful professionalization. Exclusive control of professional territory depends on achieving social distance from other groups who provide similar services, a process that involves two crucial legitimization strategies: first, competency and superiority based on technology, rationality, and efficiency, and second, an ethical claim of detachment from any particular class or business interest. In both these areas, the American architectural profession's claims have historically been much weaker than those of other professions.[4]

Unlike engineering and medicine, which draw authority from science, or law, which receives it from the state, the architect's professional authority rested on an inherently contradictory base: combining the inherited identity of architecture as artistic creativity (reinforced by the powerful influence of the French Beaux-Arts system) with a more recent ideal of technical rationality. The already uneasy balance between these two components was complicated by the professional imperative for distance from competing groups. Architecture's claims to the technical monopoly of building activity were already circumscribed: on one side by the technical superiority of engineering and on the other by the empirically established efficiency of the building industry.

The profession responded to these competing claims by creating even more contradictory identities. The introduction of the division of labor and specialization into office practice (particularly the inclusion of engineers into architectural firms, as in the famous partnership of Adler and Sullivan) rationalized design and production, promoting greater efficiency while undermining the synthetic integration allowed by more purely artistic methods. On the other hand, the profession's artistic pretenses allowed architects to easily disengage themselves from the spheres of technique and building construction, thus effectively separating them from the material bases on which their professional activities rested.

Because it could not claim possession of its own technical competencies, the profession's claims increasingly invoked superior aesthetics rather than superior building. At the same time, however, its aesthetic claims were not fully liberated. Unlike artists, who have never been formalized into a profession, but rather produce for a specialized market that generates a huge "reserve army" of unsuccessful practitioners, architects do not operate

freely, but require clients. The contrast was not lost on nineteenth-century architects: Mariana Van Rensselaer observed in 1890, "Fancy a painter unable to make pictures except when someone says to him: Paint now, paint this or that, and paint it thus and so. . . . Imagine this, and you will realize the architect's actual position and the contrast between his life and that of other artists. The difference is the natural result of the fact that architecture is not an art pure and simple. Its products . . . cannot be spun out of the artist's brain, but must cost a great deal of money."[5] Architecture's expensiveness inevitably binds it to the sources of finance and power, making it very difficult to achieve the autonomy from bourgeois standards that art had fought for since its emancipation from aristocratic patronage.[6]

Even so, the need for patronage constituted only a partial barrier between architecture and the large heterogeneous mass clientele other professions, such as medicine and law, had developed. Because licensing had legally established a monopoly over only certain types of building, unlicensed contractors and speculative builders continued to dominate residential and commercial construction. The professional necessity to define themselves as an elite caste of builders required licensed architects to remain aloof from these activities, and by and large, the leaders of the profession scorned the vast potential market for middle-class houses. By distancing themselves from contractors and builders with economic control of the field, they also effectively repudiated the interests of moderate-income clients. Instead, the profession linked its professional identity to large-scale monumental commissions requiring wealthy patrons.[7] This left architects dependent on the restricted group of clients who could afford to support their ambitions: the hoped for, but only occasionally awarded, patronage of the state (far less active than in Europe), but more often, the backing of large business and corporate interests.

Thus architecture's apparent professional success actually rested on provisional and contradictory grounds. Of the dual aims of the professional project, architecture achieved only the second—status and economic advantages; in the absence of the more significant goal of control over the professional market, even this achievement remained tentative. Their inability to

control their own professional marketplace left architects at the mercy of the larger market economy. As a result, architecture, a luxury rather than an indispensable service, remained within a premodern model of elite patronage, its provision of services primarily dictated by economic power. Moreover, the profession's single advantage—status and economic power—could be maintained only by keeping a social distance from surrounding groups. This entailed the loss of considerable technical and economic control over building activity, further restricting the architect's ability to engage issues in the larger social arena autonomously. Paradoxically, the architect's status depended equally on pursuing an ethics of disinterest, establishing an equivalent social distance from the capitalist market and its profit motives.[8]

Architecture's tradition as a liberal art, though weakening its strength in the modern professional marketplace, provided it with intellectual weapons that could offset this weakness and address these contradictions in the ideological arena. An already established theoretical discourse, inherited from Vitruvian times and considerably enriched by recent contributions from the École des Beaux-Arts, could be strengthened by new constructs to address its current dilemmas; its dissemination through new institutions such as universities and professional journals and through adjunct professions such as architectural history and criticism was integrated into the professional project. Ideological claims served multiple roles: they buttressed the status of the profession as well as acted as a substitute for economic control over the built environment, thereby allowing the profession to claim in the intellectual realm what it could not accomplish in the material world.

Faced with these conditions, architecture has managed to survive as a profession by constructing a series of identities tenuously balanced between actual practices and ideological representations. At several critical historical junctures, the profession has been forced to restructure itself to sustain its professional autonomy and legitimacy. Architects, to avoid the ever-present danger of incorporation into the dominant economic and political structure, created powerful myths that directly addressed the inherent dilemmas of professionalization; they structured these myths around the two main actors in the professional project, the architect and the client.

■ **Act 1: May 1, 1893.**

Daniel Burnham Opens the World's Columbian Exhibition

The World's Columbian Exhibition constituted the profession's first great public achievement. The "White City" itself, a temporary plaster representation of an ideal architectural realm, functioned more as an ideological statement than as a potential urban reality. The fair's enormous success transformed its organizer, Daniel Burnham, from an architect who served Chicago's commercial and real estate interests into a charismatic hero, "a resourceful and indomitable planner, the real Titan, the Emperor of architecture," according to one of his contemporaries. Burnham's commanding slogan, "Make no little plans, for they have no magic to stir man's blood," claims power that largely exists in the ideological realm. Although Burnham's major public successes, such as the replanning of Washington, D.C., were accomplished through political rather than architectural means, their ambition and scale heightened the image of the architect's absolute control. This belied the actual fragmentation of the profession into a hierarchy of specialized roles, a development most evident in the nearly corporate organization of Burnham's own office.[9]

Perhaps more significant, the fair provided an opportunity for the profession to identify two clearly separate clients, one the actual purchaser of architectural services, the other, the "ideal" client, an ideological construct that allowed the profession to focus on the group the profession hoped to serve and that established the claims of ethical disinterest required for professional legitimization. Although the fair was actually sponsored by Chicago's corporate elite, its ideal client was the larger public as user of urban space. The aesthetic unity of the fair defined a public realm that countered the chaos, greed, and squalor evident in laissez-faire American cities. The device of the ideal client permitted the profession, although still financially dependent on elite patronage, to acquire legitimacy through ideological means that were denied them by the economic necessities of patronage. This allowed a professional critique of the narrowly economic aims of their real clients, commercial investors seeking speculative profits in the city. At the same time, the exclusively ideological and aesthetic nature of this critique made it vul-

nerable to a higher level of co-option, and the fair's ideals were soon employed in "imperial" city planning and, through piecemeal application, the realization of even larger speculative profits through urban development.[10]

■ **Act 2: January 11, 1937.**

Walter Gropius Arrives at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard

The modern movement appeared in the United States almost forty years after the World's Columbian Exhibition, bringing with it a powerful new set of answers to architecture's persistent professional dilemmas. Forged in the heady climate of the Weimar Republic, the Bauhaus, under Walter Gropius's direction, had negotiated a somewhat halting path through the plethora of modernisms to arrive at a new definition of the tasks of the architect. Although this role had to be radically readjusted to fit into the framework of the American profession, even in its truncated version, it offered a new scope and vision for professional ambitions. From his beginnings under the thrall of the Werkbund slogan "from the cushion to the city" to his later book, *The Scope of Total Architecture,* Gropius consistently affirmed modernism's tasks as the restructuring of the entire environment according to an unvarying set of principles. Although the conditions of American practice rapidly dismantled Gropius's vision of a collaborative method in which minimalist forms derived from technical analysis and functional criteria would be successfully applied to a broad range of social needs, it succeeded as an ideology. Modernism, a minority position in the profession at the beginning of Gropius's tenure at Harvard had become dominant by the time he left in 1952.

The rapid acceptance of modern movement architecture in the United States owed much to its self-presentation as the application of scientific rationalism to the field of building. By the mid-thirties, actual achievements in large-scale housing construction then taking place in Germany and Holland as much as rhetorical slogans such as Le Corbusier's "machine à habiter" lent credence to these claims. Modernism's visual imagery of functionalism and objectivity appeared even more convincing in comparison to the pallid aesthetics of the waning American Beaux-Arts movement. Ironically, how-

ever, the real achievements of the *siedlungen* were jettisoned in their passage across the Atlantic in favor of Hitchcock and Johnson's exclusively aesthetic definition of the international style. Thus, curiously, modernism's acceptance on an artistic level effectively undermined the technical claims it needed to legitimize itself on a professional level.[11]

In spite of their claims to the *Zeitgeist* and the mastery of the new needs and building types generated by modern life, modernists were no more successful than their academic predecessors in competing with adjacent professional competencies. The biggest failure was with engineering, architecture's main rival for control of the realm of industrial production, whose systems, materials, and image lay at the heart of modernism's self-definition. Already effectively incorporated into an industrial structure dedicated to expanding productivity, American engineers barely noticed the architect's pretensions.[12] That doomed architectural attempts to engage with industrialized building production, such as Gropius and Wachsmann's experiments with manufactured housing and the magazine *Arts and Architecture*'s Case Study House projects, to an inevitable failure.[13] Instead, the profession satisfied its industrial dreams with brilliant symbolic gestures—such as Mies van der Rohe's skyscrapers, which celebrated the steel frame without altering either its structural or building technology—while actually delegating many technical areas of design and construction to engineering expertise.

Modernism's ideal of industrial production helped to perpetuate the profession's already profound separation from the construction industry and the building trades. Although architects often accepted conventional construction for economic reasons, this went counter to the ideology of modernism, which scorned the vernacular practices of the building industry because of an infatuation first with industrial and then with naturalistic materials, both of which required expensive and skilled craft techniques. While architects kept the professional distance necessary to maintain their separate status, large-scale builders organized housing construction into a virtually mass-produced system, along the way providing vast amounts of conventional housing at cut-rate prices.

Failure to reestablish connections with the technical and economic bases of building also undermined modernism's social ideals, closely linked to its technical abilities. Modernism brought with it a very specific ideal client, the masses, a nonpejorative social category that included both workers and the less affluent ranks of the educated middle class. European experiences with large-scale housing and institutional projects sponsored by the state suggested that by adopting the state as patron—serving as mediator for the masses—the profession could resolve the conflict between real and ideal client. During the 1930s, the New Deal's support of public building and housing, although often clothed in traditional styles, initially appeared to offer a similar resolution. The Housing Act of 1949, promoted by the construction industry and lending institutions, eliminated this possibility by establishing a new ideal: owner-occupied single-family houses available to the masses. Since architects had already ceded the mass market in housing to speculative builders, this effectively severed their connection to large numbers of ideal clients. Although architects continued to pursue government housing commissions, the needs of their real clients dominated architectural production: their clientele was split between large-scale corporations, which needed office towers, and members of the upper middle class, who wanted distinctive homes.

That division reflected a growing stratification in the profession between large offices that dealt with corporate clients and small offices that provided single houses. Office organization inevitably reflected those clients: Skidmore, Owings and Merrill became the model of a corporate firm, a huge national organization with identical regional offices vertically integrated to offer complete design services. The complex hierarchy of the firm's structure was necessary to ensure maximum efficiency and productivity from more than a thousand employees. Even within this type of firm, a tendency toward greater specialization generated new professional categories that increasingly challenged the architectural domain: industrial designers, interior decorators, landscape architects, and urban and transportation planners. At the other end of the spectrum, small offices concentrating on domestic commissions proliferated. If large offices controlled the profession economically, small offices dominated numerically.[14]

Alternative ideologies of practice, even assuming modernism's assertions of total architectural control, were not adequate to counter this reality. In 1945, Walter Gropius attempted to restructure professional practice into a more socially useful form by establishing a new firm, The Architects' Collaborative (TAC), founded on a cooperative model emphasizing teamwork with allied disciplines such as sociology, economics, and art. These idealistic goals floundered from the beginning, and as the office became successful, it inevitably fell back on a corporate model of specialization.[15] However, a more powerful compensatory myth had emerged with the publication of *The Fountainhead* in 1943. The novel's hero, Howard Roark, established a new definition of raw architectural ego: armed only with talent and integrity, Roark triumphs over a corrupt profession, venal clients, and hostile critics. This image of uncompromising individualism, loosely based on the career of Frank Lloyd Wright, firmly lodged itself in the subconscious of the profession, for it appealed far more to American sensibilities than did Gropius's self-effacing position.[16]

As Gropius's career drew to a close, the disparities between his actual practices and their ideological representations encapsulated the contradictions of the American profession. By the mid-fifties TAC produced the massive Pan-Am building, which set a new record for rentable square feet in a single building, demonstrating Gropius's nearly complete capitulation to the demands of economic and political power. Even when they did not lower construction costs, modernism's reductive forms appropriately mirrored the homogenizing tendencies of multinational business and the bureaucratic state. In the real world of practice, success was achieved only at the cost of a profound architectural and philosophical retreat from Gropius's previous ideals. At the same time, Gropius's greatest professional achievement was to establish architecture as an academic discipline with sound theoretical and pedagogical premises. This gave architecture a new level of status and prestige and allowed the university to become the primary base for addressing the persistent technical and ethical problems of the profession.

■ **Act 3: July 15, 1972.**
The Dynamiting of Pruitt-Igoe Housing, St. Louis

The successful appropriation of modernism's forms by the dominant political and economic order made the gap between theory and practice too large to contain within the existing modernist ideology. The destruction of Pruitt-Igoe's high-rise housing blocks symbolically culminated more than a decade of attacks on the premises of modernism, which initiated the beginnings of the first new theoretical discourse since the thirties. Every aspect of modernism's theory and practice was subjected to criticism, effectively undermining the continued relevance of not only modernism but the American profession itself. In terms of professional significance, three critiques were particularly meaningful, and each implied a solution, even if it was only applicable to the questions addressed by that critique. Throughout the 1970s, the critiques provided a series of provisional reformulations of professional roles, new definitions of both architect and client that could undergo testing in practice.

The Technological Critique

The proto-postmodern critique of modern architecture began with Reyner Banham's definitive refutation of modernism's functional and technological aspirations. In his influential study, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age,* Banham argued that early modernism's engagement with technical and industrial issues was confined to the realm of the symbolic and aesthetic. Although Banham exhaustively examined both buildings and texts, his most powerful evidence against architecture's failures was the counterexample of Buckminster Fuller. Banham cited the Dymaxion house and car of the thirties to demonstrate that genuinely technological solutions to the problem of modern living had to be grounded in the realities of engineering principles and industrial production.

Banham and a whole generation of alternative architects, from Archigram to contributors to the *Whole Earth Catalog,* failed to understand that Fuller's technocratic approach asserted a largely mythical ideal. Fuller's claims that social and ecological problems could be solved through the rational applica-

tion of technology ignored the realities of existing economic and political structures. Exposure to the realities of the corporate economy, the building industry, mass production, and democratic consensus rapidly clarified the fundamentally idealistic and illusory nature of this alternative model. Fuller's disciples and other advocates of unrealizable technological solutions retreated to architecture schools, which, protected from the realities of professional practice, functioned as experimental venues for ideas that could not survive in the architectural marketplace. There, in spite of their alienation from the profession, the technological utopians' activities legitimized essential facets of the professional identity—an avowed seriousness in addressing global concerns and continuing pursuit of technical and scientific goals.

The Social Critique

Another line of attack focused on the failure of modernist solutions to resolve social problems. Here the gap between theory and practice separated European theories formulated in the 1920s and 1930s from the practical experiences of postwar America. Radical architects and planners used a populist notion of democracy to attack the generalized application of modernism's universal forms to social needs such as housing and community development. Its uniform geometries, rather than offering an egalitarian order, were seen as imposing an alienating social regimentation. This posited a modernist architect who was not only an elitist by birth and training but also an oppressor who forced an unwelcome vision of modern life on unwilling users. Similarly, the postwar welfare state that implemented these visions was no longer perceived as a benign mediator operating on behalf of the masses, but as an authoritarian and dehumanized bureaucracy. In many cases, reality justified these accusations: for example, rather than addressing housing needs, 1960s federal housing programs simply provided holding cells for a permanent underclass. Worse yet for modern architecture, given a choice, the tenants usually rejected modern architecture, as in the drastic remodelings at the Pessac housing estate designed by Le Corbusier.[17]

In order to serve the cultural and social needs of society, radical archi-

tects proposed solutions ranging from participatory design to advocacy and self-help architecture. All of these strategies required a profound transformation of the nature of the professional structure, inverting the traditional relationship between architect and client to allow previously excluded users a democratic voice in the design process. Similarly, in slums or squatter settlements, architectural norms were reevaluated, allowing social needs to take precedence over formal order. In this way design was envisioned as part of a larger and liberating social project. The apparently total social and professional transformations radical architects called for, however, actually constituted an incomplete negation, which simply reversed the already fictional roles of the all-powerful architect and the ideal client, the masses, while accepting the ideological assumptions on which they rested.[18]

Put into practice in the real world of architecture, these principles ran into trouble. The radical architect's sacrifice of professional power to democratic principles failed to empower the masses. In the face of the economic and political forces that construct the built environment—the architect's control was primarily ideological, and the client was merely "ideal," not an actual purchaser of architectural services—both were relatively powerless to effect social changes. In response, radical architecture increasingly focused on mere opposition to the dominant aesthetics of modernism. This led them to identify the masses' needs primarily in terms of "taste cultures," defending the user's preference for colonial styles or bright patterns as meaningful social opposition.[19] Even these limited claims to architectural decision-making were illusory, since without the mediation of the state, users did not command the power or money to affect architectural products. Thus, unwittingly, radical architects replaced modernism's welfare state with a marketplace, in which, unfortunately, their ideal client did not have the means to purchase architectural services.[20] Defeated in their efforts to restructure professional roles, the radicals also retreated to the universities, where like love beads and student demonstrations, they served as reminders of the unfulfillable social hopes of the sixties. Like the technological utopians' position, radical architecture's critical stance against the profession paradoxically reinforced the profession's claims of ethical disinterest and social concern.

The Formalist Critique

Robert Venturi's attack on modernism, unlike the failures of the technological and the populist critiques, profoundly affected both architectural theory and professional practice. Venturi acknowledged and incorporated both previous critiques with one significant alteration: he stripped them of their ideological underpinnings, defining the architect's professional role according to its actual material power and practices. He designated "platitudinous architects who invoke integrity or technology as ends in architecture, the popularizers who paint 'fairy stories over our chaotic reality'" as specific targets. Venturi's unflinching realism led him to eliminate any possible technical and social aspirations in architecture since they appeared to be practically unrealizable under existing conditions. Acknowledging the powerlessness of architects to change the world, Venturi suggested in his preface to *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* that architects instead narrow their concerns and concentrate on their own job. Accepting architecture's inherent limitations, he claimed, might ironically reverse "the architect's ever diminishing power and his growing ineffectualness in shaping the whole environment."[21]

As defined by Venturi, the architect's "own job" was an essentially formalist task, based on an enlargement of modernism's circumscribed formal vocabulary to include both historical elements and, as proposed in *Learning from Las Vegas,* lessons from the commercial landscape. The "decorated shed," Venturi's conceptual answer to the modernist "duck," was essentially an architectural billboard on buildings already structured by the market's lowest common denominator—economy. Venturi continues to practice what he preached: although his successful firm operates at the higher level of institutional commissions, its participation in architectural projects is typically limited to exterior design. Collaboration with specialized, technically oriented firms confines Venturi's role to the surface decoration of complexly programmed buildings, as in the Lewis Thomas Laboratories at Princeton, where the architectural credits are listed as Robert Venturi, architect for the exterior of the building, and Thomas Payette, architect for the interior.[22] Venturi's successful attacks on modernism, by eliminating the profession's ideological protections of technical and ethical claims, resulted in the further separation of building from architecture and, by emphasizing the marketplace of taste, allowed the dominant economic tendencies to become the final arbiter of architectural form.

■ Epilogue: June 20, 1986.
Michael Graves Begins Designing for Disney World

Venturi's work was influential in restructuring the postmodern profession. Effectively abandoning its claims to technical rationality and rejecting the social ethics of disinterest, the profession largely staked its claim to status on aesthetics. This was an almost inevitable choice since, of the Vitruvian triad of firmness, commodity, and delight, only delight was not claimed by professional rivals.[23] If the original formulations of postmodernist aesthetics made much of the socially progressive nature of its expanded vocabulary of imagery, these sources were quickly forgotten once the rewards of corporate patronage became clear. Rather than drawing on popular and vernacular sources considered congruent with the cultural codes of the masses, imagery became more explicitly elitist. Classicism, an ideology of form invoking historical precedents, provided the prestige necessary for the profession's continuing distance from more pragmatically oriented professional groups. If the architect's economic privileges derived from the same patronage as before, status came from a new source—the past.

What remained was the marketplace, the actualities of the building industry, and the limits set by the client paying the bills. The expanding economy and culture of consumption incorporated postmodernism's emphasis on surface and readable imagery as a useful form of packaging essentially identical structures into more compelling products, subsuming architectural style into a brand-name marketing strategy. Recognizable personal styles and signature forms, such as those of Michael Graves, in effect constitute designer labels, which raise the price of the product and the prestige of the consumer, a logic used by developers such as Gerald Hines, who spends considerable amounts developing skyscrapers with architecturally self-conscious

forms. Postmodernism's adaptability to the marketplace allowed its rapid and nearly total assimilation for commercial purposes, an architectural trickle-down effect that has made postmodernism the style of choice for the cheapest and most expedient building types: motels, shopping malls, and fast food restaurants.[24]

If postmodern style functions as packaging, the buildings it clothes have become increasingly large and complex, requiring sophisticated solutions to programming and structural requirements and demanding many separate environmental control systems. These needs have generated even more rival competencies impinging on the architectural domain: as many as twenty-five consultants may be required on a single building. Building practices have also changed to meet these needs, with construction firms becoming larger and more concentrated and often acting as developers. New supervisory positions, such as construction managers, now rival the architect's claims to manage the construction process. Clients are also playing an increasingly significant role in the building process. Large organizations construct buildings as important capital assets, which need to produce income and profit as well as provide an efficient working environment, leading them to make much more specific demands on architects. A new professional specialization, facilities manager, acts for the client in establishing the program, overseeing construction, and supervising the completed building. All of these changes have reduced the profession's connection with building even further, as Robert Gutman warns, turning the architect into a design subcontractor, whose decisions are limited to aesthetic arbitration.[25]

The narrowing of architectural practice has been balanced by an expanding architectural avant-garde, who, opposing the corruption of architecture by business, take on roles closer to that of the artist. Avoiding the inevitable "contamination" of the professional world of building, these architects survive through teaching, publication, competitions, and the growing niche in the art market for architectural drawings and models. The gap created by the absence of building has been filled by complex theoretical constructs that render architecture untouchable by the demands of modern life. A range of postmodern stances, heavily informed by poststructuralist think-

ers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, have emerged: Peter Eisenman's moderate position extends the formalist claims of late modernist art to create an autonomous architecture, which need only relate to the internal conditions posited by its maker. In the more extreme case of Daniel Libeskind, architecture is completely disengaged from any analogy with building in favor of metaphysical operations undertaken through drawing and object-making.[26] In both cases, in spite of their claims to decentered subjectivity, the result is the same: the role of the ideal client has now been subsumed by the architects themselves, a stance not that different from that of Howard Roark.[27]

Given this situation, the answer to the question "can architects be socially responsible?" is, as the profession is presently constituted, no. Both the restricted practices and discourse of the profession have reduced the scope of architecture to two equally unpromising polarities: compromised practice or esoteric philosophies of inaction. After nearly a hundred years of professional existence, architects have almost completely surrendered both the tools and the ideological aspirations that might allow them to address the economic, political, and social concerns posed by modern life. Clearly, given both the inherent contradictions of the profession and the historical legacies of its struggle to maintain professional autonomy and status, altering this situation will be difficult. At the same time, a growing demand from individual practitioners and students to reconnect architecture to social and economic questions demands a thorough reformulation of both theory and practice in order to avoid repeating the well-intentioned but mistaken strategies used by modernist reformers and sixties radicals.[28]

First of all, the architectural profession must establish new connections with the existing technical and economic practices of building, since aesthetics alone cannot solve the difficult problems of current housing and urban conditions. These connections should be based on an analysis of existing material conditions rather than on idealistic projections of future technical capabilities. Focusing on social concerns can establish a professional base from which architects can claim more control over building and challenge professional rivals who occupy even narrower areas of competence.[29] In spite

of its reduced ideological claims, the architectural profession is expanding: the growing demand for its services is demonstrated by both an overall growth in profits and an increase in the architect's share of the construction dollar. The AIA's sanctioning of forms of practice such as design/build and design/development opens up new possibilities for expanding the limits of the profession.[30] Both developments suggest that considerable room to maneuver still exists within the profession if architects can lift themselves from their lethargy and seize the possibilities that now are opening up for them.

In order to maneuver successfully, the profession needs to give some serious thought to renewing and refashioning its ideological premises. Unlike "realist" readings that reify the status quo, deconstructed poetics that justify disengagement, or idealist mystifications of real practices, ideology can also serve as a positive fiction, telling a story about a larger vision of professional aspirations.[31] By creating compelling stories about social needs, the architectural profession can envision a new set of ideal clients, not the generic masses of modernism, but specific groups whose needs are not being served by the architectural marketplace. There is no shortage of possible subjects: the homeless; individuals and families excluded from the real estate market; communities threatened by decay or development; elderly, poor, and minority groups with inadequate housing. Identifying these ideal clients is an important first step toward creating a discourse adequate to the enormous tasks faced by the architectural profession if it accepts the challenge of reshaping society and the built environment.

1. A growing literature on the American architectural profession includes the following: Bernard Boyle, "Architectural Practice in America, 1865–1965—Ideal and Reality," in *The Architect*, ed. Spiro Kostof (New York. Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 309–44; Andrew Saint,*The Image of the Architect* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983); Magali Sarfatti Larson, "Emblem and Exception: The Historical Definition of the Architect's Professional Role," in *Professionals and Urban Form*, ed. Judith Blau, Mark La Gory, and John Pipkin (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press,1983); Robert Gutman, *Architectural Practice: A Critical View* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Architectural Press,1988).

2. Larson, "Emblem and Exception," pp. 60–61 An enormous literature addresses the emergence of American professionalism, both conceptually and historically. For general discussions, see the following: Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press,1977); T. J. Johnson, *Professions and Power* (London: Macmillan,1972); descriptions of American professions can be found in Burton Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism* (New York: Norton, 1976); Daniel Calhoun, *Professional Lives in America: Structure and Aspirations* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press,1965); Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1964); Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York: Hill and Wang,1967).

3. Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press,1980).

4. Sibel Bozdogan, "The Rise of the Architectural Profession in Chicago, 1871–1909" (paper delivered at the Society of Architectural Historians Annual Meeting, Chicago, April 1989).

5. Quoted in Larson, "Emblem and Exception," p. 49.

6. Alan Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism: A Retrospective Glance," in *Modernity and the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), pp. 244, 245.

7. Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home*, pp. 53–4.

8. Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*, pp. xii, xiii.

9. Thomas Hines, *Burnham of Chicago* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press,1974), pp. 268–71.

10. Mario Manieri-Elia, "Toward an Imperial City," in *The American City from the Civil War to the New Deal*, ed. Giorgio Cuicci, et al. (Cambridge, Mass.. MIT Press,1979), pp. 76–104.

11. Reyner Banham, "Actual Monuments," *Art in America* (October 1988), p. 175.

12. Edwin Layton, *The Revolt of the Engineers* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve Univ.,1971).

13. See Gilbert Herbert, *The Dream of the Manufactured House* (Cambridge, Mass.. MIT Press, 1984) and Elizabeth Smith, ed., *Blueprints for Modern Living* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

14. Boyle,"Architectural Practice in America," p. 318.

15. Ibid., pp. 335–38.

16. See Andrew Saint's discussion of *The Fountainhead* in *The Image of the Architect*, pp. 1–18.

17. Philippe Boudon, *Lived-in Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press,1972).

18. See Marco Çenzatti, "Marxism and Planning Theory," in John Friedmann, *Planning in the Public Domain* (Princeton, N.J.. Princeton Univ. Press,1987), p. 440.

19. This concept, developed by Herbert Gans in *Popular Culture and High Culture* (New York: Basic Books,1974), was adopted by Robert Venturi for use in *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Mass.. MIT Press,1972).

20. A more thorough discussion of the failures of "populist" architecture can be found in Laine Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, "In the Name of the People," *Forum* 25, no. 3 (1976), pp. 291–303.

21. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966), pp. 20–21

22. Gutman, *Architectural Practice*, p. 41.

23. Larson,"Emblem and Exception," p. 72.

24. Steven Kieran, "Theory and Design in a Marketing Age," *The Harvard Architectural Review* 6, pp. 102–13.

25. Gutman, *Architectural Practice*, p. 45.

26. Diane Ghirardo, "The Deceits of Postmodern Architecture," *After the Future: Post-Modern Times and Places*,ed. Gary Shapiro (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse Univ. Press,1990), pp. 236–37.

27. Ibid., p. 244.

28. Robert Gutman,"Taking Care of Architecture," *Progressive Architecture* 71 (April 1990), p.120.

29. Kenneth Frampton has advocated the reconnection of architecture and building in "Towards a Critical Regionalism," *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 16–30.

30. Gutman, *Architectural Practice*, pp. 46–49.

31. Stanford Anderson developed this concept in "The Fiction of Function," *Assemblage* 2 (November 1987), p. 19.