DIVISARE

Architecture easily succumbs to false questions. Is the profession an art, science or social action? Or perhaps a little bit of everything? Yet, these are not just any old questions. They express an urge to confer meaning. I am not so worried about that. Architecture would not be any different if it became a science tomorrow.

Architecture is just architecture.

HANS VAN DER HEIJDEN
THE EYE OF THE CARPENTER

DIVISARE

HANS VAN DER HEIJDEN
A CARPENTER'S EYE

A 'carpenter's eye' is a literal translation of the Dutch word Timmermansoog. It means a good eye for estimating the right size. I have never come across something similar in English.

HvdH

It can often seem that those in power don't want us to enjoy making things for ourselves – they'd prefer to establish a cultural hierarchy that devalues our amateur efforts and encourages consumption rather than creation.

David Byrne, How Music Works

Contents

Construction

'Ah, well, that's how you effectively kill the architect's profession!' At a German congress, a young architect had claimed that you had to go and ask how to build on the construction site and an established colleague felt com-pelled to put him in his place – rather daring in this age of unbridled listening-and-connecting.

The congress was about the extent to which construction belongs to the core of architecture. The word 'construction' has a broad meaning in German. My father, who regarded his Dutch architectural manuals as Bibles, used the word 'construct' in the same way as the Germans, similar to the way we talk today about detail.

It proved that the peers gathered had a firm belief in architectur-

al construction as an all-determining expertise. The way in which that faith was supported varied considerably. Roughly speaking, there were two groups. The first regarded construction as a performative aspect of their profession: to them it served the smooth realisation of buildings. One might characterise this as the construction of the building site. On the other hand was the construction of the art school, in which is sought the imaginative potential of an architectural construct. The first position was argued to lead to buildability, simplicity and order; the second to trial and error, complexity and signature.

The two different camps explained concepts such as innovation and experiment in almost opposite ways. The resulting linguistic confusion was as entertaining as it was instructive. One would wish that all architects would reflect on their work this seriously.

The S-word was barely used – and yet the conversation at the conference was about nothing but sustainability. It reminded me of some special constructions designed by an architect who was not present. A few years ago, in a tiny attic studio, I saw a bathroom floor made from a single slab of natural stone. The gutters, profiles and drains were accurately integrated. It must have been quite a hassle to lift the plate into the attic. It seemed as if the bathroom completely coincided with the intense colour and texture of its floor.

Even more convincing was the guest-house by the same architect. The rooms were sparsely furnished and covered with wallpaper that tuned the spaces with heavy, saturated colours. The paper-hanger had been a wizard. The motifs matched exactly. At the top, a ribbon finished the cutting edge of the wallpaper.

I found a remarkable white

marble fireplace. A box-shaped beam lay on two cylinders. The two columns had spiralling veins that turned in opposite directions. In the simplest possible way it suggested an architrave upon two columns.

The intensity of these constructions transcends the German controversy. The builder of this beauty, Hans Kollhoff, again demonstrated the serious and deliberate way in which he constructs. There is something essential that sits in between his authorship and the perfect execution by the paperhanger or the stone master: the responsible choice of material. Of course one should not kill that profession. If we really have to extract building materials from the earth, then let us do so with utmost care – or so Kollhoff's constructions teach us.

Type

The French historian and architect Jean Castex co-authored the book Urban Forms (published as Formes urbaines in 1977 and in English in 2004). I met him before he gave a lecture on Palladio in Rotterdam. I thought I was paying Castex a compliment by confessing that although Urban Forms had made my life as a student difficult, it had simplified my design practice. With practical examples, the book demonstrated that the living environment cannot be tampered with.

The difference between the front and the back of a house, for example, is stark. The Modernist house with lots of glass ignores the way in which residents take possession of it and want to regulate their relationship between their private domain and public space. Not for nothing is

the French subtitle of Urban Forms 'de l'îlot à la barre' (From the Perimeter Block to the Slab). I do not read the book as an unprejudiced study of something like rational cities, but as a plea for urban form, based on the demise of the closed perimeter block that made way for problematic slab arrangements. For successive groups of architecture students it was a decisive handbook.

Castex did not accept my compliment. He immediately distanced himself from the book. Philippe Panerai was the main author. He himself wrote only the first chapter, on the Parisian city-block of the nineteenth century (a chapter that is indeed less didactic than the others). Castex went on to work on Renaissance architecture, Chicago's urban development, and Frank Lloyd Wright. He never took an interest in a single field, style or era.

Anything goes is not Castex's

cup of tea. In Rotterdam, at the age of 77, he talked about Palladio's architecture on the basis of the architect's life story. The wealthy Gian Giorgio Trissino discovered the architect's talent when he was still a stonecutter. He took him to Rome to study antiquity, gave him work, and introduced him to the right cultural circles. It should be noted that on the trip the young craftsman had to trudge behind his benefactor's carriage.

More relevantly, Palladio became adept at coining incomplete success which, moreover, was not always attributable to himself. While he distinguished himself with the solidity of his buildings, he had to contend with awkward building plots and capricious clients. His handbooks – I quattro libri – present idealised, geometric and completed designs. These were 'buildings that he himself could not make', as Castex observed. Humility coupled with grandiloquence, manipulated by

purity and pragmatism – well, these are still indispensable characteristics of the 'starchitect'.

To interpret Palladio's work, Castex used the theory of type: typology. Fortunately, he did not mix up the concepts of type and typology. Type stands for immutable architectural arrangements. With some goodwill, it can be maintained that a type can be uniquely linked to a designer or client (think of McDonald's restaurants). Typology is the study of those types, which orders and ranks them. As a contemplative discipline, typology is by definition impersonal. Through Palladio's publications, his work became replicable. It became shareable – and influential to this day.

Castex did two more remarkable things. He emphasised the importance of architectural knowledge – after all, it was from this that Palladio's career sprang. And Castex showed his own sketches. Here stood a practising

architect who wanted to put his profession in comprehensible terms.

When asked about the development of his typology after Urban Forms, Castex said that typology not only orders and problematises, but also possesses creative capacity itself. It is precisely that strength that can be exploited. The understanding and interpretation of types precedes the design of the contemporary form, on the way to an architecture that is itself shareable. Between the idealisation of architecture and its total pragmatism lies a large field of knowledge that can be creatively exploited.

Profession

Architecture easily succumbs to questions about its nature. Is the profession an art, a science or social action? or perhaps a little bit of everything? These are not just any old questions. They express an urge to confer meaning. I am not so worried about that. Architecture would not be any different if it became a science tomorrow. Architecture is just architecture.

Gerard van Zeijl's PhD thesis on the French architect Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand (1760-1834) is a case in point (OASE 22 carried a summary). Durand became a professor at the Polytechnic School in Paris in 1795. Then in 1802 and 1805 he published lecture summaries – the Précis des leçons données à l'École polytechnique – which were to become a standard treatise of

architecture praxis. The Précis provided students with a design method. Questions of identity and meaning were pushed aside.

Van Zeijl claims that it is a misunderstanding that Durand turned his back on the past. What was new was his attitude towards history. This shifted from a search for the origins of architecture – for example in paradise, the Renaissance or in classical antiquity – towards the collection and classification of examples. These could be used by the architect to create a theoretically infinite series of designs.

Van Zeijl emphasises the political context in which the Précis arose. The French Revolution was around 15 years old. Architecture was no longer the monarch's toy but had to serve the Republic. Durand studied the construction programme of schools, libraries, hospitals and even public housing. Architecture became a public issue that had to be understandable

and sharable. Classical architecture was to monumentalise a new civic society. The tympanum no longer belonged to royalty but gave grandeur to public institutions, including schools and libraries. But, post-Revolution, architectural praxis needed modernisation.

For Durand, it was self-evident that economy, the availability of building materials and rationalised load-bearing structure would put limits on design. The Précis contains example layouts for new building programmes. Inevitably, these are based on familiar types, not styles. Grids allow for combinations and adaptations. No longer was the genius of the designer central to the profession.

The topicality of Durand's relationship with the historical material of architecture is remarkable. I notice that architects are increasingly interested in architectural history. We have more or less finished ruminating

on the Modernist canon, which is not very extensive in time or scope. As yet, this recent fascination with the history of architecture has not degenerated into connoisseurship of the columnar orders: for the time being, architecture is not served as expensive wine to epicureans.

An example is the catalogue to the 2017 Haussmann exhibition at the Pavillon de l'Arsenal in Paris, edited by the practising architects Benoit Jallon, Umberto Napolitano and Franck Boutte. It offers insights into the design principles of the Paris of 200 years ago by redrawing that city at all scales, from street furniture to urban plan. The accommodating capacity of the buildings plays a more emphatic role than what they signify.

Durand's architecture was put on edge by the French Revolution. Actually, today's interpreters might argue that he was already talking about the architecture of the city. He described a

profession at the service of democratic public life. It was demystified; you could learn it, teach it, and pass it on. The craftsman did not work in back rooms; he had to account for his solutions in an economic, constructional and operational sense.

If, in the here and now, architects feel that they must regain ground, for example in social housing, then this rationalism seems to me to be fully applicable to their profession. Precisely now that public affairs have such a messy image (and even the democratic ideal itself is being thrown into question here and there), they cannot be transparent enough in the exercise of their profession. Individual genius is of no relevance. Durand shows that a publicly exercised architectural profession can achieve both utility and grandeur.

Housing

Affordable housing is back on the political agenda, but at the same time is rarely the subject of a substantive architectural discourse. Architects complain (as only architects can complain) about lost authority, about being sidelined by the initiative that market parties have taken in the design and realisation of such housing. How can the architecture of housing be studied in this context? Apparently, there is no such thing as a standard practice that designers can emulate.

The ever-growing mountain of typology books offers exotic alternatives. Such books may be brimming with projects with complicated cross-sections and floor plans. Thus do they wrongly suggest an architectural can-do in the residential do-

main without clarifying how their extreme positions relate to economy of construction, the building process and dwelling itself. Without these insights, the experiments for the middle classes in Siedlung Halen in Bern and the Unité d' Habitation in Marseille are incomprehensible and useless – and the view of necessary innovations in the here and now is obscured.

More relevant is the typological research of the Swiss architects Emanuel Christ and Christoph Gantenbein. In their typology books, they show local housing types that manifest themselves in cities such as Hong Kong, Rome, New York and Buenos Aires. They show how they arise from local particularism. The exotic nature of the cities and of living there is made understandable. Even the extreme examples they analyse usually have a rather banal origin. Studying them is instructive and useful in modern housing practice.

A further interesting phenomenon is the Neapolitan residential palazzo, built in large numbers from the beginning of the eighteenth century. The vitality of this speculative residential building is astonishing. It is the city's mainstay housing type, derived from the palazzi built during the Renaissance in northern Italy. In Naples, the originally aristocratic type was simplified and made suitable for mass housing as a speculative project. There are usually several flats around a closed courtyard.

The Neapolitan palazzo is built with rough carpentry and masonry techniques. The decorations are done in fine stucco. In those days, building it was second nature. A specific peculiarity is the double staircases, usually situated at the back wall of the courtyard. From the gate (portone), intermediate space (cortone) and court (cortile), the staircase slowly emerges as a large piece of furniture. The spa-

tial developments and their accompanying lyrical decoration stretch the essentially Classical architecture with architectural dissonances and counterpoints. It was the time of Baroque music, after all, of J S Bach and Antonio Vivaldi.

In other words: whereas in the Renaissance the court was fixed as a static and horizontally oriented living space and the staircase was literally an aside, Baroque architecture offered scope to design a new phenomenon: the vertical dynamism of the public staircase in the court.

Despite all these ceremonial qualities, the inner world of these palazzi is part of everyday life. The buildings are not all equally successful, are rarely neat and never serene. But often enough the staircases are full of lush plants; in the cortone, prams stand between the mailboxes and news-stands; bicycles and scooters are parked between the staircases. On a field trip my

students met Maria, who let us in and showed us something of Neapolitan living.

Back home, the students continued to analyse the phenomenon and designed a modern palazzo themselves. We talked about architecture, certainly. But Maria's virtual presence became compelling. The students did not feel detached from her culture and seemed to find it quite an honour to come up with decent house plans. They made coloured detail drawings of their own Neapolitan staircases. We talked about the architecture needed to make the reception area in an ordinary residential building find its form. The enthusiasm that the palazzo phenomenon aroused in these young designers was infectious.

The conclusion is obvious: thanks to Neapolitan typology, architecture was once able sustainability to define everyday living within the reality of commercial building and devel-

opment.

There is another lesson. Because it could not be otherwise, Naples grew in the eighteenth century through compact, urban, medium-high-rise buildings. Neapolitan housing density is high and the city is vital. It demonstrates that there are alternatives to the typological repertoire, which all too often is limited to the terraced house, the stairwell and the residential tower. There really are other ways to densify cities.

Analogy

Die Analogen! Using that phrase, the Swiss mean to say something similar to those who talk about Brick Fundamentalists. This is about architects who don't withdraw from the reality of the daily living-environment and its production. A lukewarm dish because without big ideas is the allegation. The practice-oriented attitude of the Analogen (the Analogues, we may say) is difficult to esteem within the bastions of academia and criticism. If not just derogative, the term also comes across as envious. Yet, just like the Brick Fundies, the Analogen do well in everyday design practice and, secretly, wear their by-name joyfully.

Miroslav Šik is the frontman of the Analogen and was, until 2018, professor at ETH Zürich. On the occa-

sion of his retirement, a thick book on his education appeared. Šik supported his teaching with consciously openly-formulated neologisms – again not a proper ticket for academic recognition: the book is called Analoge Altneue Architektur.

At this farewell gathering, ETH's Director, Philip Ursprung, succeeded in clarifying Altneue in an original way. Šik had never bothered to explain that didactic term to him, but one day, while waiting for the tram, he had let on that he liked to go to Liverpool when he was a young man, while himself studying at ETH. He was present at the first gigs of the Sex Pistols. Ursprung suggested that Šik felt comfortable with punk rock's energetically communicated message of 'No Future' – understood as a nickname for the pessimism of the grey mid-1970s. Today, we don't regard punk anymore as a sombre, negative anti-movement; then, the suspicion

of 'No Future' – as well as Šik himself – was not directed against progress as such, but at the futuristic thinking which had caused Chernobyl, Bhopal, the cold war and other disasters.

Šik's teaching in the eighties was indebted to the notion of the 'analogous city', formulated by his predecessor and teacher, Aldo Rossi. In the book, his former student and co-worker, Lukas Imhof, demonstrated that Šik elaborated that notion at the scale of the building. He did so by the empiric study of traditional sources and built references – that is, by analogies. For instance, he found examples in the Netherlands by architects like Frits Eschauzier and in the 1941 exhibition catalogue Nederland bouwt in baksteen [the Netherlands Builds in Brick].

His first generation of students yielded prominent architects: Andrea Deplazes, Valerio Olgiati, Quintis Miller, Paola Meranta, Christian Kerez, Andreas Hild. Šik required

these students to start by making enormous perspectival drawings of their designs in their location. These were labour-intensive studies in charcoal and chalk, often in desaturated colours. They were certainly no presentation drawings. It is better to speak of task definition, prepared with blood, sweat and tears, in which the materials of the buildings are part of them right from the beginning. Glass for instance, shows as it is in the misty, Alpine climate: indistinct or shiny, but rarely transparent.

In the last decade the step was made to computer rendering. References became less exotic. Commonly, students worked at housing projects in which practical givens such as budgets, safety, sustainability and construction technology were part of the task; during design development, off the shelf products were preferred. Šik demanded a self-evident synthesis of all these aspects of design. Here Šik

touches the core of the architectural profession: the ability to transpose divergent types of information into a practical design.

At Šik's farewell, Lukas Imhof told an anecdote. As a student he had not supplied his housing design with proper storage space and Šik asked him where the children's boots and bike helmets were supposed to go. When Imhof did not manage to answer the question satisfactorily, Šik looked at him and said solemnly: 'Lukas, you have to love the people'. At this point I understood the critics of the Analogen for, of course, the comment can easily be taken as lukewarm kitsch. For some time I did not understood how an erudite, accurately articulating man like Miro Šik engaged with such woolliness.

But what if we do not try to understand such statements for their normative content, but as a didactic

gesture, as an expression of the 'show, don't tell' that belongs to upbringing and education? A lukewarm dish? At least, Šik's positioning is courageous and politically charged to a degree that unfortunately has become unusual. And there is no eroticism without the lukewarm of body temperature.

The world is on the eve of investing extensively in the sustainability of its housing stock. If there is any desire for such investments to go beyond the ecological humdrum and to produce stable buildings and cities, then such everyday volume-building ought to be researched and developed further within the architectural domain. Here the Analogen have something important to say.

Pathos

The US president Donald Trump planned to make Classicism the default style for government buildings. Make America Beautiful Again! The reflexes on the architectural front were predictable. Donald Trump is turning back the clock, I read on an American website. Such reasoning equates Classicism in architecture with conservatism, or worse. One could stick to the notion of Classicism as shorthand for making a link with the origins of democracy in Ancient Greece. It is the idea that parts of architectonic culture might be appropriated that is objectionable.

If autocrats steal common property like Classical architecture, are we not allowed to take it back?

The Viennese-Jewish philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein was engaged in a lifelong struggle with his own origins. In Von Wright's collection of his aphorisms, Culture and Value we find that Wittgenstein wrote in 1948 that 'Tradition is not something that everyone can pick up, it is not a thread, that someone can pick up, if and when he pleases; any more than you can choose your own ancestors. Someone who has no tradition and would like to have it, is like an unhappy lover.'

Insofar as the discussion of architectural tradition has any depth, suspicions of assumed identity and of acquired taste certainly do not play a secondary role. Does this whole tradition exist? to what extent can it be shared? how acceptable is it if we modernise unwanted ideologies? And even: how useful is tradition? All understandable questions, but they actually disqualify the phenomena of tradition in advance.

Tradition has nothing to do with utility and accountability. According to one dictionary, the word means an old custom of a (large) group of people. Wittgenstein took this further, counselling that old habits exist without actually being tangible. Traditions are shapeless and are difficult to fix in reason. And so it is not without significance to his discussion that he brought into play that great emotion of the joy of life, pathos.

In practice, a special conception of the British tradition is pursued by the London-based architectural office of Timothy Smith & Jonathan Taylor. They reduce it to what they call Marginal Classicism. They believe in a Classical architecture that emerges from the British Picturesque tradition, in an architecture that enters the world imperfect because it is designed as such. Beautiful, they claim.

But there is something to be argued against such marginalised

Classicism. One could, for example, maintain that Classical architecture is a desire, an unattainable ideal of perfection. My own buildings are imperfect but that is because the circumstances demand it, not because I want it so badly. Unfortunately.

One can argue the character of Classicism and our traditions without doubting what they make possible for our design work. Traditions may be hard to pin down, but do nurture the design of comfortable buildings that nestle in the ancient customs of large groups of people. The beneficence of buildings that rely on tradition is easy to share. However 'traditional' buildings in which you can revel, consciously or without thinking, are buildings that are amoral and illogical. There is no message in their architecture.

Seen in this way, the US head of state did not set the clock forward or backward. By trying to hijack a cultural phenomenon, he was doing

something else. He was attempting to demonstrate his superiority. This has nothing to do with the tradition of uninhibited pleasure. Certainly, his intention is based on pathos – on an unfortunate pathos, that is.

Wittgenstein would have understood that. On the inevitability of the traditions we build on, he concluded that 'The happy lover and the unhappy lover both have their particular pathos. But it is harder to bear yourself well as an unhappy lover than as a happy one'.

Mies

We cycled twenty kilometres through Berlin in search of Haus Lemke, designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. 'A garage' our adolescents had established.

'Come on, let's move to Berlin' my beloved said. She was right. It is one of the few houses in the architectural canon in which I can picture us living.

What is the reason for this? I am not a professing Modernist. The divine battle of ideas in Modernism is soporific. Demigod Peter Smithson wasn't the only one to reduce Modernism to a duel between its two supreme gods. 'Mies is great, but Corb communicates' he groaned.

Back from holiday, I got into trouble with a cross-thinking architectural twitic. I had called Le

Corbusier a boring man who made boring buildings. In between two of its restorations I once visited Villa Savoye, which he had designed. That may be a villa, but it is definitely not a house. Rather, it seemed to me to be a rattling design shack, which only served as a backdrop for photos and parties – and for photos of parties. The chapel in the Jura, Notre Dame du Haut, has certain merits. However, this structure is also ultimately a draughty barn. And then those thick layers of paint everywhere; Corb supplied his buildings with make-up abundantly. 100 years after the Citrohan house, I was hearing the despair of the twitic about my faithlessness.

In Berlin we succumbed to Haus Lemke's makeup-less brick Modernism. The benefits of the house don't come across as a forced, aestheticised ideal of living. It is up to the residents to personalise the house and provide it with things (and

paint). The design establishes the relationship between the street, the house and the garden and regulates the spatial relationships between the three living rooms. Haus Lemke anticipates the conventions of living. We imagined how the house would tolerate the disorderly stuff of our combined household goods. In this regard, as a visitor, there is a lot you don't get to see. The garage, sanitary rooms, storage rooms, kitchen and pantry are housed in an almost closed zone. There is a spacious basement. By the grace of the service areas, our living space wouldn't clog up. A cunning house, Haus Lemke.

I spoke to Charlotte. In her own words, she 'grew up in Mies.' As a young architects couple, her parents had acquired a flat on Lake Shore Drive in Chicago. Photographs of Charlotte's youth are meticulously composed, black and white, and serene. She plays with blocks on a

shiny cast floor. Curiously, the interior is quite dark. In the background you see curtains hung in front of the glass curtain wall, forming the backdrop for abstract paintings that are hung in front of the curtains. A hammock hangs across the room. There are a few Thonet chairs. A travertine plate, frozen off from the entrance platform of the building, serves as a side table.

Charlotte's childhood memories illustrate the metropolitan joy of life in Chicago in the 50s and 60s. Mies, Myron Goldsmith, Bertrand Goldberg, Charles Genther, Harry Weese and Charles Murphy got drunk in the house of her parents, who were a generation younger. Sardonic were the congratulations to an attendee who had the honour to supply new curtains for the Farnsworth House when it was flooded for the very first time.

Mies himself had no appetite for complicated lift conversations

and lived in an old house down the road. Excited, the photographer Harry Callaghan jumped on his lap there, breaking the fragile back of the chair. Mies always left the damaged Eames chair in place.

Lake Shore Drive was stylish. Pets were forbidden and initially silver curtains were required. Later vertical and horizontal blinds were allowed as long as they were grey. It was up to the residents to personalise their accommodation. The houses of Charlotte's girlfriends were often less tasteful. They were full of fake panache or were ahead of Post-Modern kitsch. Nowadays, Lake Shore Drive is a home to wealthy people and architects. Flats have been pulled together. People even seem to have merged two entire floors into a huge duplex house. You could call that urbanisation. 'Mies takes all sorts of shit,' says Charlotte.

Being great is good enough. Architecture is an applied art with

limited communicative possibilities. What does Corb's paint actually tell us? Celebrating the pleasure of the hammock, Mies' broken Eames chair and the frost damaged travertine plate point in a different direction. Opposite Corb's humourless evangelism is Mies' silent joie de vivre. He practised in an imperfect reality and –most of the time – stopped designing in time.

Our adolescents were euphoric when they found out that the Russian occupying forces had actually used Haus Lemke as a garage. Mies takes all sorts of shit.

Doom

In contrast to architecture and secular ideologies such as liberalism, socialism and Marxism, religions have devised ways to cope with death. The architectural profession is opportunistic. It is both a strength and a weakness. In times of Covid-19, fellow professionals have plunged into socially-distanced society. I note the support of some random architecture critics: 'I find the [improvised] design for a local micro-market in Rotterdam extremely inspiring' and 'The drive-in industry is rapidly being enriched with new concepts, of which drive-through condolence is the innovative highlight'. But Ole Bouwman tops the list: 'Distance as a creative challenge. Urban ballet. Design of the diversions. Social dis-dancing'.

The one-and-a-half-metre (or whatever) society has overcome the world. Only, the word 'society' is far too big. Forced distancing is crisis-intervention. It is a public order measure devised by virologists. Our critics forget that in the remaining decimated markets in Europe one and a half metres measures have long been compulsory. They are makeshift. Nobody likes them.

The funeral experience which you now often experience entirely in your own car (perhaps with plastic-wrapped cups of instant coffee and snacks on the dashboard) is perhaps a promising idea. After all, the car is the hygienic means of transport par excellence. This new car-mobility will cause us spatial problems, but that is another story. For the moment the procedure is as desirable as a shabby drive-in cinema.

Public order is defined by restrictions. Keeping a fearful

distance should not be confused with challenging dignified and culturally-rooted living together. So the design of that new defensive public order is best left provisional. Embellishment merely creates another design gap between a troubled humanity and well-meaning designers.

Ole Bouwman may repackage such pettiness as urban dances, but it has little to do with architecture. There is no poison in it – by which I refer to musician-artist Brian Eno, who once tweeted an ominous statement which I took metaphorically: 'The trouble with New Age music is that there's no evil in it'. Read again what the architect Adolf Loos wrote: 'If we find a mound six feet long and three feet wide in the forests, formed into a pyramid, shaped by a shovel, we become serious and something says, "someone lies buried here" ... Now that is architecture'.

In the world of yore, the cemetery was next to the church in

the village. The churchyard made doom visible in everyday life. It is no coincidence that Adolf Loos found his burial mound in a place outside the city, in a forest. In the metropolis that was Vienna a century ago, there were only cemeteries, there were no longer any churchyards. Death was far away. Loos questioned how the detached city-dweller related to doom. The final manifestation of this was the burial mound isolated in a forest, a grave reduced to a mound of earth as large as the man who rests beneath it. Simple and anonymous though it may be, the burial mound is far from being temporary.

Loos worked with known rituals and cultural desires. Architects are condemned to opportunism, optimism and can-do, sure. That does not exclude the possibility that they design houses for weddings and birth-parties with Loosian obstinacy in an architecture that also endures the

doom of illness, death and mourning. That is dignity. Or style. Durability for my part. Architecture serves life in all its facets. And remains silent.

Ten years ago, a group of students designed a grave-monument for Adolf Loos. In a brick factory, they laid out their design with the bricks they found there. They chose double-fired, deeply black, bricks and stacked them in an elongated double-symmetrical pyramid. It was obvious. Then a student noted that a 'head' to the grave was missing. The students dismantled the tomb. They laid another pyramid, this time asymmetrical. Simple. It became quiet. The students no longer dared to walk on the bricks. They fixed the scene in their minds, made photos and ater a while they put the blackened bricks back in the factory and went home.

Variants of these articles were previously published in Dutch on the Dutch architecture platform Architectenweb (architectenweb.nl).

This selection was edited by Charles Rattray.

DIVISARE QUOTES 9

HANS VAN DER HEIJDEN
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