

# Originality and Architecture

Many architects and other artists fear originality, because they don't have it or suspect it is an easy trick to attract attention. They often believe that anything original lacks substance. Actually nothing in art is strictly and completely original with its creator. He has been inspired by many things, past and present, sometimes imitating them but always eventually assimilating them if he is a real artist. He knows that imitation is a deadend street and that when it comes – beauty goes. Much of what he works with is not of his own invention. He uses geometries, the origin of which are unknown, and also finds inspiration in the 'free-forms' of nature. These sources belong to no man until he makes them his own in his individual and original works. The original works of others, the natures of materials, methods, principles, revelations of science, faith and more also gives him roots from which to grow; they are all grist for his mill and if he has inspiration, imagination, initiative, courage and a balance of feeling and reason, all with dedication to his art, he will grow in his own original way. His works show originality naturally because he is naturally original, and they mean much more than being 'novel'. Such an architect is in the great tradition of change and revolution. But often what seems to be revolution is, in a larger sense, evolution and part of 'the mainstream' of art after all!

Any genuine work of art is necessarily original. It is the first and last, of its kind, in the order of its existence. It has not been copied from anything and is produced for the first time with freshness and authority. We soon tire of novelty if it lacks depth and meaning. A truly original work has these and many more qualities; it is the result of a natural growth of ordered ideas. There is no beginning, for no one knows, even its creator, the many sources that natured it, and no one can know its ultimate effect, so it has no ending. It has emerged in the ever-continuous-present as a unique and valuable contribution to all men by man's own creative spirit; if it has value it will be timely and timeless, and it will also be both personal and impersonal with its creator, if it is a masterpiece, its influence will continue with the histories of man's achievements and it will be treasured.

A masterpiece must be original, one of a kind. It is the only work, even of its creator's output, which has grown in its own particular way. It has a new kind of beauty and came about because it had to, full-strength, uncompromising, honest and extending the horizons of the artist's work, his art, and its benefits to all mankind, moreover, a masterpiece must have the quality of surprise, to engage our attention, and of mystery to hold our interest. It must also be complete in itself with its own character of disciplined order, no matter how 'free' it may seem, we desire to enter into and to inhabit any great and original work of art – to possess it and to allow it to possess us, be it literature, painting, music and architecture. This is why architecture is such a powerful art: we can inhabit it physi-

cally as well as spiritually in time and space. Someday perhaps it will, like music, become less earth-bound, more flexible and athletic, more ever-changing, and free. Then architecture will escape the outside-in formalism of the static regimentation of our steel and concrete frames with their monotonous 'plug-in-systems' and resulting rhythmic sterility. New materials, methods, needs and increased technological knowledge will enable original architects to produce newly-beautiful design-structures of architecture as directly as the composer of music reaches us, without performance or interpretation by others, via the new medium of electronic music. This will allow the architect to conceive of and to realize his work, through some such process as chrysalization or electro-magnetic attraction which will make obsolete present handicraft, machine methods and 'computeritis'. Exit the 3 and 4 letter Big Business boy's firms in building and enter the creative, artist-science-architect-truly original!

But whatever and whenever the means, the creative architect must beware of subjecting his works to a 'personal style' or 'trademark'. His handwriting will have his own personal characteristics, regardless of what he says with it. But what he's saying is of much more importance and each of his works deserves to become its own form and style. Therefore each of his works will be original and collectively they will represent their architect's originality. Such an architect will not fear originality but will thrive on it; he cannot and will not imitate others or himself!

*Bruce Goff, Architect  
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