

T R U T H

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T H E P R A C T I C E O F A R C H I T E C T U R E

v i o l e t a e i d e l m a n

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A foolish consistency is the  
hobgoblin of little minds,  
adored by little statesmen  
and philosophers and divines.  
With consistency a great soul  
has simply nothing to do. He  
may as well concern himself  
with his shadow on the wall.  
Speak what you think now in  
hard words; and to-morrow speak  
what to-morrow thinks in hard  
words again, though it contra-  
dict everything you said to-day.  
-"Ah, so you shall be sure to be  
misunderstood."- Is it so bad,  
then, to be misunderstood?

.....  
ralph waldo emerson



Man has belonged to his species for quite a while and has been a creator as long. If we look at his architectural creations, we are astonished at the variety in his work through History and Space.

If we consider an architectural creation an expression of truth, since creation is Godly and God implies truth; then, does truth vary? Wherein, then, lies the meaning of truth if its expressions are so varied?

The young architect is the possessor of a diploma from an "Institution of learning", a licence to "practice architecture", and some other paper forms which qualify him to be an architectural creator.

For his architecture to be a creation, we have assumed, it must be true. But, where in his study and practice did he learn truth, to give birth to a creation ?



Can we say that truth belongs  
to an era, or a region?

A Hindu temple and a Mayan pi-  
ramid were created at similar  
ages; the Ford House and the  
Johnson House were conceived in  
relatively close regions. Is one  
less of a creation than the other?  
Is one less true?

Emerson makes the statement that  
what is thought today by one man  
might not be thought tomorrow, by  
the same man. Does he mean to say  
that not even in man's mind can

thruth last from one day to the  
next?

These are contradictions and  
chaotic thoughts; but, they will  
confront a potential creator, if  
he think at all.

But, maybe, in our search for  
truth we are losing its meaning.  
It seems that our memory and our  
learning have not quite succeeded  
in helping us grasp truth.

Let us then unclothe ourselves  
from these. Let us forget what was  
done and how to do.



And, so, we stand without history  
and without power of learning,  
since it seems that the incon-  
sistencies lie within these realms.  
What then is left? You might ask.  
How can we judge truth if we have  
no standards and no knowledge?  
It makes one feel insecure. Does  
it not? It seems like the crutches  
have been taken away from us; and  
our crippled minds might crumble.  
The diploma was given us for our  
learning and memory, and so the  
licence.

Society seems to assume, if it cares at all, that we are capable of truthful creation. But, do we assume as much?

Let us create the hypothetical situation in which we can stand alone, and unclothed from memory and learning. Around us is physical reality; and in us only senses and emotional perception- which might be included among our other senses. Now, let us look at anything, say a rose. Rose will come to us as a beginning. As no memory exists, Rose



will be it, and related in its entity to itself, its surroundings, its time and the man who perceives it.

The experience as a whole is unique; because, in our minds, Rose does not belong to a species, a family or a group. In our minds, then, there is a positiveness of perception; and our emotion shall be the first and only of its kind.

Now, let us come to the rose tomorrow. We shall have lived

and moved-thus changed- twenty  
four hours more.

With no memory, Rose is again  
a begining. Time has changed,  
and so has the eternally moving  
physical surroundings.

We see and smell Rose, as yester-  
day; but, with no power of learn-  
ing or memory, its shape and smell  
have not been categorized. Instead  
they, again, create a circumstance  
which, including the mind's growth,  
as an added element, will be again  
a unique experience, an emotion



first and only of its kind.

What then is the truth of the rose?

Yesterday we saw and experienced and asked: "What is this". The question was directed to the rose within its particular environment, at a particular moment in time; and, from the mind through its particular and unique emotional state.

If today we see the rose, the question: "What is this" is now directed to a new set-up, new in

its time existence, in its complex physical reality and from a new emotional state of mind.

"What is this" then, is different at both instances; and its answer being implied in the nature of the question, makes both answers to the same question, equally true. But, we do have memory, and we do learn. And when we ask "What is this" we have "the answer": flower of many petals of the bush type and belonging to the rosacea family. We smell it, see its color and



feel its thorns, and when tomorrow we return, we "know" what it is. We assume then as the truth of the rose the things we remember of roses. We see its truth in the general constants of roses, instead of its magnificent singleness in time, nature of its surroundings and the emotional perception of our minds.

At this point I must make it clear for sake of avoiding unnecessary misunderstanding, that I do not deny the validity of scientific

categorization and study of the general physical characteristics of things.

But, I am not concerned with the obvious patterns and physical appearances; but, the truth of things as germs of creative process.

In creative perception the only truthful answer is the question itself. "What is this" will carry its truthful answer, but only when asked as an all-encompassing question and not as a futile singling



of a particular obvious characteristic.

The same applies in architectural creation. The true answer will come forth, only, when through sensitivity the true question is asked; and, the meaning of the question can only be one: of the problem, the time, the nature of the physical surroundings and the nature and emotional state of the creator.

Then, the diploma and the licence should be discarded if a man be

honest with himself, Nature and society; and allow himself a licence when he is able to ask the right question; which by being the true question shall carry within it the true answer, and this in turn be his diploma. Let us then, return to the young architect, and see how the problem faces him in his practice of architecture. Say he is to design a school in the center of a park. His design must be the truthful



expression of the problem, its answer. His design shall become a true creation, if the question be true.

How, then, can he approach the circumstance in order to perceive the right question?

First, by acquainting himself with the problem, its requirements, and its nature; which in the case of the rose, is perceiving its message through its physical existence. Then, by freeing himself of memory and learning.

Upon the asking of the question  
the trees in the park, the voices  
of children, the time, the wind,  
and the emotional status of his  
mind, they will all unite.  
If he can, then, surrender to the  
universal meaning of the problem;  
if he can give himself to the  
rhythmic movement of its elements;  
then, when swirling around and  
around, the voices of the children,  
the rustle of the leaves, the beat-  
ing of his heart, will lose all  
sense of independent singleness