

# THE EDUCATION OF THE ARCHITECT

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*With a view to obtaining authoritative opinions on the subject of Architectural Education, an invitation has been extended to the heads of the recognized schools of architecture in Canada to give in THE JOURNAL their conception of what would constitute an ideal course in Architecture. Professor Traquair, who has been at the head of the School of Architecture at McGill University for many years has consented to initiate the series and his views are expressed in the following article. Professor M. S. Osborne of the University of Manitoba will follow in an article to appear in the next issue—EDITOR.*

**T**HE architect is an artist who uses structure as his material. Every fine art is based upon some material through which its effects are produced and which gives it its peculiar character. So the musician uses sound, the poet uses words, the painter uses canvas and colour and the architect uses the construction and the materials of building. We may go further and speak of the architecture of a silver cup or of a stained glass window, since the design of these objects is architectural in so far as it is based upon the material of which they are made and the manner in which they are constructed. The architect is the artist of structure, primarily of the structure of buildings.

But very few buildings are made only to be looked at; the architect must also satisfy practical needs. This necessity must not be thought of as a limitation to his art, but as an opportunity. These practical needs are part of his material, they form indeed one of the principal directing motives of his design. Without the need of satisfying the practical uses of his building, the architect would be designing in a void.

There is therefore no such thing as an abstract or "pure" architecture of form and proportion, and we must beware of that curious conception which regards a building as a work of pure form only trammelled and limited by the unfortunate necessities of use and material. Every work of architecture is based upon practical needs, placed upon an actual site and composed of real and possible materials. To a real architect nothing could be less interesting than a building on a flat site composed of a material capable of anything and designed for no particular requirements. The practical needs are the architects' opportunity, he is the artist of practical needs.

Much harm has been done to modern art by the conception of the artist as a person quite divorced from practical things, producing only a personal art of pure beauty and acting quite without regard to his public. This conception is, I believe, utterly false and injurious; the architect is fortunately saved from it by the conditions of his work.

Art grows from the past, like everything else, and though it may please some to think that they are completely new and original entities, yet, for all that, they are, like the rest of us, the children of the past and they cannot reject this inheritance.

Man is distinguished from the animals by his power of accumulating knowledge so that each generation uses the experience gained by its predecessors. Our practical needs, our methods of construction, our very thoughts are all inherited from our parents. We may change, indeed we must change as conditions change, but we cannot be independent of the past. This is tradition, and it is well to remember that revolt against tradition is a recognized phase of traditional development.

So we find certain large subjects upon which architecture is founded and in which the young aspirant must be trained. They are: *First—Construction, including materials. Second—Practical needs. Third—Tradition, or history, and the combination of these three subjects into: Fourth—The design of buildings.*

To these we may add some knowledge of the manner in which an architect conducts his business, his legal rights and obligations and the code of professional ethics which governs him. This is really an education in his duties as a citizen rather than a training in his abilities as an artist and it provides us with a *fifth* subject:—*Professional Practice.*

The architect must also have certain technical skills. He should be able to realize his design to his own satisfaction and to express his ideas clearly, to the satisfaction of his client and his contractor. He must be able to draw and to write a technical description, he must have some control over the ordinary elements of architectural expression in the way of mouldings and textures and, in a country like Canada, where the building professions are not so highly organized as they are in many European countries, it is just as well that he should know something of surveying and of quantities. This technical training, particularly that in drawing, must of necessity occupy most of his time in the early years of his course, for he cannot go further without it, yet it must not be exaggerated. We can imagine a good architect who could hardly draw and who knew nothing of surveying, but we cannot imagine an architect ignorant of construction, materials and tradition.

The programme thus outlined is large, indeed it is a great deal too large and in practice it must be limited for we have only a very limited time in which to carry it out. The length of the academic course is limited for strictly educational reasons as well as by the purse and patience of the student,