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EDUCATION

PEGGY DEAMER

Education happens throughout architectural life: before we start architecture school; when we are at university; when we practise. To equate education with the academy is wrong and, to a certain extent, we know this, since the way we load up the academic curriculum is determined by what we assume comes before and after. Traditionally, what comes before – our subjective experience of cities, buildings, home, neighbourhoods – needs to be wiped out so that we new architects don't perpetuate stereotypes, clichés and the status quo. And what comes after is limited, practical, qualified, instrumental and service-oriented. The academy is the 'ideal' middle – uncompromised, unconstrained, imaginative, speculative, utopian – and because it is seemingly ideal, we think of it as 'education'.

This somewhat humorous categorisation that arbitrarily divides our subjectivity has been particularly operative in the period of aesthetic expansion introduced by late Modernism. From the '70s onwards, 'innovation' has been equated with the formal exploits that the style wars – Postmodern, Deconstruction, Blob, Box, etc – offered and it made some kind of sense that the academy, sovereign of formal exploration, would be seen as the prescient place admired by pre- and post-academy. But fate (and late capitalism) has handed us circumstances that render both the privileging of the university and its characterisation as 'ideal' moot. Today, it is not funny that this idealisation still exists and particularly sad that academic education is so stagnant in response to the world that we, as architectural citizens, actually face. We still teach in the Beaux-Arts tradition that privileges the studio, charrettes, competition, design virtuosity, heroic programmes, the emphasis on precedents and the honouring of past masters. With minor adjustments, we haven't fundamentally changed our subject matter (except for the obvious addition of new precedents and masters) nor its mode of representation – drawing and models (except for the obvious addition of digital software).

The weirdness of this longevity, given our operating in a world of different resources, economics, politics, social structures and subjectivities, is made even stranger when we remember that the Beaux-Arts system itself reflected its particular era: Durand's system of compositional gridding was a strategy for handling unprecedented

and newly complex building programmes; the Grand Prix-dominated pedagogy conformed to an era of governmental patronage and Viollet-le-Duc's structural rationalism responded to the new materials and the construction trades introduced by industrialisation. More than that, the 19th-century Beaux-Arts education was tied to the establishment of a new cultural class defined as 'professionals', responding, as Magali Sarfatti Larson has explained,¹ to early liberal capitalism's need to establish an elite knowledge sector centred on ideals of *noblesse oblige*, standardisation and a progressive division of labour. It's sad that we correspondingly haven't been able to respond to an era of new building techniques, new financial imperatives, new forms of information distribution and new subjectivities.

I suggest that if one shifts the debate on architectural education away from 'architecture' to 'the architect', we will be better able to educate on architectural citizenship. And for me, this means asking the question, 'What positions do we want architects to take *vis-à-vis* the world and what kind of education supports them?' I use the word 'position' specifically in the sense proposed by the Freudian psychoanalyst Melanie Klein who identified that we each approach the outside world from different psychic, emotional and intellectual positions, some healthy, some not. This idea of psychic (and architectural) positioning displaces the idea of a thing – 'architecture' – that we architects are meant to serve and replaces it with actors in the world using special skills facing particular problems. (If nothing else, it tosses the idea of disciplinary autonomy out of the window.)

So, what are the positions that we as architects take up *vis-à-vis* the world? Certainly one is aesthetic: we approach the world searching for beauty and want to put objects, spaces and situations in it that contribute to that beauty. Another is 'conservative'; that is, we evaluate what objects, spaces and situations the world actually needs: we try to conserve and preserve as much as we add and impose. Yet another is social: we consider who benefits from the things we produce and who doesn't. Another is political: we want to know which power dynamics allow us to do our good work and which are obstacles. And yet another is selfish: we don't just want to approach the world in these ways for the sake of others; we want to be in that world and

experience the beautiful, well-conserved, politically complex and just world ourselves.

What education best sharpens these positions? First, let's agree that architects produce scenarios, not (just) objects, and thus allow conceptual changes in pedagogy to emerge. Studios have a broader definition of what constitutes 'design'. No longer emphasising the aesthetic protocols shaping a building, design, as my colleague Paolo Tombesi has described, is 'a problem-defining, problem-solving, information-structuring activity that, on the basis of understood goals, conditions, and rules defines a specific course of action'.² In this, the nature of what constitutes the studio vs ancillary courses breaks down. Depending on how you see it, 'studio' either absorbs the historical, cultural, economic, ecological, political, labour-oriented, technological, procedural and representational dimensions surrounding design decisions or, in this absorption, will no longer be recognisable as 'studio'. Technologies that make us more intelligent and collaborative and mechanisms that break down the difference between design and construction are embraced. BIM is no longer seen as the province of efficient architectural production but as a system of collaboration and empowered knowledge; coding is as legitimate an option as drawing; systems thinking/training connects our work to larger dynamics that we may or may not control but which we ignore at our peril. 'Professional practice' courses, traditionally the hinge between academic speculation and the (seemingly limiting) 'real world', disappear. All years and most of the courses within a year are 'professional practice' – in one sense practising what our métier offers and in another, none of them is strictly 'professional'. Learning about normative contracts, responsibilities, business plans, liability and professional codes of conduct is no longer our preferred horizon; changing them in order to change our relationship to power is.

If the academy admits it's in the real world, the profession also must embrace its criticality and 'let's-try-this' idealism. It must prove its credibility as a space of education and leverage its intelligence for the sake of our society, yes, but also for the sake of architectural education. Leveraging this intelligence means bypassing our top-down professional associations that coddle an outmoded notion of 'architecture' and instead organise offices from the bottom-up to share knowledge, expertise, workers, benefits, political savvy for 'professional' empowerment. When we aim at social relevance in lieu of job chasing, job management and labour exploitation, architectural practitioners will project knowledge forward and offer models to the academy. After all, the profession, over the last 20 years, has had a front-row seat to the effects of neoliberalism, terrorism, shrunken social concerns and ecological disasters. The fact that it has failed to respond effectively does not mean that it hasn't picked up questions, tools and strategies to function in our now world – questions, tools and strategies that the academy has ignored. The profession has produced CAD/CAM, BIM, integrated project delivery, ecological apps,

augmented reality, 3D printing, robots, WeWork, Kattera – programs and organisations that we may or may not approve of, but which at least engage with contemporary architectural production and, unlike the academy, shine a light on the issues that we architectural citizens position ourselves to affect.

One has to think that our inability to step towards that light despite the potential of both the academy and the profession is the result of capitalist ideology that recognises the value of keeping architects trapped in ineffectual limbo, unable to do the social, environmental and preservationist work we would do. But we have to examine why we are so willing to accept this marginalisation. Re-enter Melanie Klein and her analysis of subjectivity. For her, individuals take up one of two fundamental positions: the depressive and the schizophrenic. The first – depressive – is the healthy one. It is depressing because the psyche recognises that the thing it loves for being so satisfying can also be the thing it hates for being so disappointing. While it is depressing to realise that the good/loved object can be the bad/hated one, it is realistic and well adjusted. The second – the schizophrenic – is unhealthy because it splits the one object, with good and bad attributes, into two separate ones: the good one and the bad one. It can't tolerate ambiguity so it splits it. The current way that we silo education from practice, architecture from other disciplines, intention from procurement, design from business, design from history and theory, and history from theory – in general, the desire to keep our silos pure, good and loved – is indeed schizophrenic. And while Félix Guattari has pointed out that schizophrenia is the natural condition of capitalism³ – we are not 'crazy' to be schizophrenic in our current era – we need to resist succumbing with all of our powers. Architectural citizenship demands that we, depressed but enlightened, move forward. It demands synthetic education.

Peggy Deamer is Professor Emerita at Yale University and an architect in New York. She is the editor of *Architecture and Capitalism: 1845 to the Present* and *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class, and the Politics of Design*. She is the founder of the Architecture Lobby.

1 Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977).

2 See *Take 5: Looking Ahead*, edited by Paolo Tombesi, Blair Gardiner, Tony Mussen (Manuka: Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 2009).

3 *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is the title Gilles Deleuze

and Félix Guattari gave their two-volume work, which is comprised of the 1972 *Anti-Oedipus* and the 1977 *A Thousand Plateaus*. See *Anti-Oedipus*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen Lane (London: Continuum, 2004), and *A Thousand Plateaus* translated by Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004).

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