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TRIUMPHS of CHANGE

Architecture Reconsidered

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Triumphs of Change

I n many senses this is a European book with a humanitarian message. In a radically changing world *Triumphs of Change: Architecture Reconsidered* seeks a prescription for readdressing architecture as a practical activity embracing human beings. Faced by the market economy of speculative developers who want to turn architecture into a saleable commodity – destroying the architect's discipline in the process – *Triumphs of Change* provides a powerful affirmation against such an outcome. It is not an architectural history per se. But it does take up the humanitarian challenge, an idea first mooted in Classical Greece and it uses this democratic energy to advance an architectural narrative – from antiquity to the 21st century – drawing upon civilizing examples of great architecture in history. Read today in a world context of volatility a new cutting edge of inspiration in architecture is long overdue.

With the benefit of humanitarian insight, a humanized world-view provides a clear alternative to the urban ugliness which pollutes most cities of the world. In activating such a perspective, I have taken the opportunity to critically reconsider the discipline in a more realistic manner free from artificial labels, stylistic concerns, and the empty rhetoric of shape-making. This disciplinary boundary does not in itself rule out criticism. But writing a readdress with this title invites dispassionate scrutiny, allowing distinction in architecture to be intellectually discussed and judged with the perception it deserves.

Arguably art history does not possess the tools to comprehensively engage in a multi-faceted discipline of architecture, so I have sought a new heterogeneous grouping using valued notions of *sense, sagacity* and the *sublime*. This allows me to carefully redefine the realities of architectural creation in history. *Sense* equals the tangible craft of good building. *Sagacity* seeks the intelligent application of *sense* to a specific situation and – while these two concepts are to some degree quantifiable – *Sublimity* encompasses the intangible in content: political, social, economic, and the very difficult art of actually building buildings that work. Any writing that does not deal with the realities of architecture simply misses the point.

While one of my concerns has been to convey much of the narrative significance in the social, intellectual and cultural history of the period, I have used my Prologue to establish an essential framework for understanding this critical development across history – from democratic Greece to some dy-

namic buildings of the 21st century. Into this perspective I have positioned original buildings that personify examples of humanitarian liberation. I have tried to write about these in an enjoyable manner which personifies the organizing principle.

Of necessity this involves rejecting most of the art history labels that fill the majority of books on architecture. Such an approach is as compelling as it is urgent if architecture is to advance as an intellectual discipline. With this adjustment in mind, I have taken the opportunity to divide Western Civilization into three people centered strands: *Gods and Goddesses, Princes and Prelates, Corporate Clients and Citizens.* This allows one to identify how change in architecture impacts upon global achievement, and how strategic shifts in Western Civilization affect the condition of architecture across space and time. These divisions are all people centered and embrace ideas of how buildings are made, work, and become imaginatively useful.