





80MG

TEXT
OLE BOUMAN

ARCHIS IS DEAD OR ALIVE

This drug can affect mental agility.

In the other school of thought, there are rules, first and foremost, a respect for reality. Before and after it is decided that matter must abide by certain laws or be understood within certain frames of thought, there is, in this line of thought, an overpowering awe for the universe that is greater than we are.



As long as there is reflection about the nature of things, there will be two schools of thought. In one, people are adamant in their attempts to understand the world, to structure it, to contain it in a single theory, or to unravel a rational order. They want, as it were, to stand above things. Pronouncements are made about the truth. Man is greater than what he thinks about.

In the other school of thought, there are rules, first and foremost, a respect for reality. Before and after it is decided that matter must abide by certain laws or be understood within certain frames of thought, there is, in this line of thought, an overpowering awe for the universe that is greater than we are. As Leibniz said, 'Who does mankind think it is to say something about a truth of which it is not even able to understand the smallest of parts?'

In understanding only living things, the case is not very different. Also here, we see a time-honored schism between those who think they can understand life and those who think that life supercedes understanding. That life is stronger, more varied in form, more varied in shape, more uncertain, more turbulent and more formless than we can ever surmise with our limited intellectual capacities.

It is not surprising that it is usually the rational world view that supercedes the vitalist one. There is just a lot more aspiration, violence, and condescension arising from ambitions to understand

this world than from the awareness of any intellectual deficits. Architecture is a striking example of this. Throughout history, those architects whose work was a representation of one or another mental order have always stood more in the foreground than those who didn't see their work as an overpowering of the truth but as a contribution to it. Ephemeral, practical and arbitrary contributions. Architecture knows, like hardly any other expression of culture does, the demand for the ultimate work. This is not only visible in the professional literature, but also in the typologies that in the passage of time were considered to be the cornerstones of our culture: the temple, the church, the palace, the museum. After all, for such tasks you're not making just any old thing. These have to be buildings that stand as models for a cosmic order. For these tasks you just don't commission architects who are humble in character.

Nevertheless, no matter what you do, life goes on. No matter what has been invented in all these centuries in order to control reality, coincidence, and other hazards, there are always new generations, populaces, and individuals who, confronted with the dominant regime, shrug their shoulders and prefer life's vital force to any mental scheme. Much more often, however, we see the life work of people who aren't really rejecting such schemes but who simply don't know enough to let themselves be hin-

dered by them. They just do it in their own way. Or, to stay with Leibniz's words: mankind doesn't think it is, it just does. This approach to life is also amply reflected in architecture, even if those examples are not counted among the great in architecture. This is called Vernacular. Or Adhockism. Or Do-It-Yourself Building. Or Community Architecture. All practices that without much fuss give up appeals for universal validity in order to serve life itself.

Life itself... if only that were true. Because here, too, reason and control rapidly take over. What started off as an acknowledgement of the origin of life soon becomes a style or a cliché. But is there then really no chance for a design that gives space to life, or stronger still, one that has a catalyzing role? *Archis* made a circuit along attempts to inspire the dead, to reanimate the dying, to pry loose the stagnant, to free the caged, to stimulate the new, and asked diverse designers for concrete ideas about how design can be used as a vitalizing force.

