

MY PROFESSION.....ARCHITECTURE

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The mere fact that you are reading this indicates either your general interest in "my profession..... architecture", or your interface with architects, or that you may have a desire to become an architect.

It is a wonderful profession, all things considered! Snickers, grunts, rolled eyes, and Bronx cheers notwithstanding.

Architecture is a learned profession, just like engineering, medicine or the law. It is "practiced" (much like the practice of medicine and the practice of law) but that is merely a term used to indicate that there is deep-seated, wide-ranging and imposing/influential work of a specific nature involved. But oddly enough not very many people know about or understand the work of the architect.

You see no one has a "family architect" like they have a family doctor. No one "goes to their architect" on a routine or periodic basis. The vast majority of people never, in their whole lives, ever meet or work with an architect--and most of them do not even know or understand what an architect does--for them, and to them on a daily basis.

Many years ago architect Pietro Belluschi attended the opening of a new church he had designed. At the end of the ceremony an older lady approached him. She said, "Thank you! Your church makes me feel so close to God". That in one comment is the crux of the architect--creating buildings and environments that touch people, help people, and makes better (even a jail can be bettered--but not necessarily respected or appreciated--by the work of the architect).

The quirky part of the architectural profession is that we seem to deal in extremes, and there is no middle ground. The general public doesn't even know we exist, much less what we do--for them--day by day. At times, they are exposed, via TV or magazines, to the weird (as they see it), outlandish, out-of-norm and widely controversial designs of the "signature starchitects". Passing such a building the public muses about "that funny thing", "wonder why they did that that way", "looks like it's falling apart"; and for the better enlightened, "how could they spend all that *public* money on that 'thing'." Howard Roark of "Fountainhead" fame was typical and indeed contributed the image to the general public via the book and movie--architects *always* are portrayed in fairly non-traditional ways (the father in Brady Bunch is a TV example), somewhat aloof; idealistic, intelligent (don't laugh), and in the main, quite professional!

Yet day by day, thousands of architects, tirelessly design perfectly valid, attractive, functionally proper buildings; satisfy their clients, and make their communities better. Some of us specify the very essence of such projects, hidden away in the construction, seen and unseen--we provide for stability, pleasant atmospheres, attractive decorations, and building functions for convenience and comfort--yet, we remain the Rodney Dangerfields of the professions--no respect!

We design anything from industrial buildings to mortuaries to hospitals, to schools, to prisons; from banks to opulent office structures, from single family houses, to high-rise condos; from simple to complex; from fancy to austere; from highly ornamented to plain; from the myriad needs and desires of millions of owner/clients, we can conceive design concepts and solve their problems.

Our contribution down through the centuries of architecture (when it wasn't even called that) is unmistakable. Ruins indicated the longevity we can create; smashed buildings shown the vulnerability of our designs to Mother Nature. But in the main we make communities bearable, convenient, attractive, and functional. Surely, all that is worth a few marks in Heaven, if nothing else. Think about it!

(Written with all due respect to our colleagues who are not architects, or registered design professionals. Your expertise, influences, insight, talent, and contributions are equally valid--and respected, here--in the same processes!)