



# **THE "44 LECTURES" AN INTRODUCTION**

*John Outram, Oct '18.*

## **A DIRECT CHALLENGE: THE "BREAKING OF THE TABOOS".**

*My 44 Lectures are a Theory of Architecture which fundamentally contradicts one of the basic foundations of 20C Modern Architecture. This is that the circumstances of life have changed so much that an entirely new and different sort of Architecture is needed to suit these changed conditions. My theory agrees that much has changed. But instead of arguing that a medium as old as Architecture must abandon its 9,000-year-old history it argues that these very changes allow Architecture also to change while still performing the functions that it always had. Indeed my theorisation argues that the new changes, both political, technical, financial, aesthetic and intellectual, allow Architecture to perform those ancient functions very much better than before.*

## **NOW WHERE DID I PUT THAT ARCHITECT...AND ARCHITECTURE?**

*This radical reversal of one of the founding myths of 20C Modernism does not please the Profession of Architects. In fact they all hate it. My Profession concluded, around a century ago, that the way forward was to steal the clothes of the Engineers. So they dressed-up buildings to look "mechanical". Adolf Loos, Mies van der Rohe, Corbusier et. al. advised using the steel, concrete and glass of American mid-west factories. Buckminster Fuller went one better and made his buildings look like aeroplanes, with a little fin like a tailplane. This has turned out to be a fatal move - both for my Profession and, more drastically, for the Medium of Architecture itself. For if Architecture is no more than Physical Engineering then who needs Architects if Engineers, Builders and Project Managers will do?*

## **AN INVERTED PYRAMID OF TRIVIA TEETERING ON A NONSENSE.**

*A chief luminary of my profession, Professor-Dr. Rem Koolhaas, has already christened the present condition of Modern Architecture as "The Age of Trash". His contribution to it is to have documented its ontically squalid History with great panache and the assistance of his enthusiastic young undergraduates. Awarded the Curatorship of the most prestigious Architectural festival on the globe, that of the 2014 Venice Biennale, Koolhaas balanced the huge inverted pyramid of trivia from which he constituted the longest-running, largest and most "directed" Biennale of Architecture upon a single point. This was the solitary and sad fiction under which all its enormous crowds had to enter.*

## **WITH HIS TELESCOPE TO HIS BLIND EYE??.**

***Koolhaas showed a domed 19C exedra, painted in an admittedly tired and effete version of Le Stile Pompier, which was being obliterated by an advancing tide, like the celestial 'front' of a threatening storm, of the metallic tubes and pipes so enthusiastically promoted by the "Heroes of Modernism". I call it "sadly fictional" because JOA had completed, in 1996, the Rice University Faculty of Engineering School of Computational Engineering at Charles and Anne Duncan Hall. Koolhaas had been invited to lecture at Rice by Professor Sarah Whiting an erstwhile member of his Staff who was now Dean of the Faculty of Architecture. The occasion was the centenary of this young, but very ambitious American University. It is not conceivable that however much Dean Whiting may have disapproved of Duncan Hall a visiting Architect-Luminary of the status of Koolhaas would not have been both shown-over and quizzed-about, by one of the University's voluble Docents, ALL of this University's Architecture (of which it rightly and inordinately proud). A prime example of these inventions would have been Duncan Hall. For this, along with the Menil Museum, has become a major item of the "Houston Art Bus" Tour. Koolhaas would have been shown JOA's richly scripted interior, JOA's machine-filled columnar Ordine along with its Entablature and JOA's huge, decorated, vaulted, "Steve and Sue Shaper ceiling. The amazed Koolhaas would have seen how my "Sixth Order" entirely liberated the ceiling from the piping and wiring that constitute the passport to authority and legitimacy of our iconically subliterate 'Modernist' peers. One wonders why none of this remained to persuade Koolhaas not to put his silly Venetian charade before the assembled Architects of the Globe. Perhaps he calculated it would be too shocking for them to learn the truth! It certainly was for Dean Lars Lerup in 1996, when Duncan Hall opened. For he advised his Freshmen and Sophomores not to enter it for fear of being corrupted by learning how to escape from The "Age of Trash" and its Koolhaasian "junkspace"!***

## **THE ODDLY SHRINKING QUEEN.**

***Dame Zaha Hadid, who was finally, after much striving, crowned Queen of Decon, suffered a curious fate. Marcus Fairs, in his eulogy to her early death < <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/04/05/zaha-hadid-personal-tribute-marcus-fairs-editor-in-chief-left-us-ahead-of-time/> >, reported that the bigger the celebrated and enthusiastically-received monsters she brought into the world the more Zaha seemed to almost physically shrink. He reports that before she died, Hadid removed herself from the attention she previously enjoyed and retreated to the corners of rooms as if to avoid human contact. The project for an "Architecture Autre", which began in the 1930's with such arrogant confidence has now, barely a century later, collapsed into the pursuit of a human lifespace whose deliberate ontic degradation is designed to accelerate the "churning-over" of real estate. The Late 19C Project of a Better World has morphed into the project for an ever-worse one so as to make it easier to smash it up and rebuild it for the sake of the Nation's tax revenues.. Nor will my Profession ever willingly give-up this grueseomely time-expired and sordid project. The whole ethical superstructure of the existing Architectural culture is committed to the preservation of the myth of an anti-Architecture Architecture.***

## **LONDON: CAPITAL OF THE EU'S "AGE OF TRASH".**

*The indifference of the English to city life has ensured that, during the 45 years of Britain's EU membership torrents of second-rate Continental Architects have poured into the big London "Superstar Architectural" design bureaux. London's entire focus on banking and centuries-long tradition of selling industrialised fakes to alien cultures encourages these "Starchitects" to obtain huge commissions from Emerging Economies. Powered by London's continuance as a major exporter of capital, these highly professionalised agents of the Age of Trash proceed to dump their "Dconstructed" junk in giant heaps on places without the critical cultural armour to defend themselves. We may instance the ludicrous All-China Beijing Television HQ. with which Koolhaas rewarded the previous Chinese Communist Administration. Brexit appears, much to the alarm of the Starchitect trash-factories to be about to choke-off any continuing access to these wellsprings of eager Continental 'talent'.*

## **TAKING-OVER THE PROFESSIONAL WHEELHOUSE.**

*If the Public want something else, like a civilised lifespace, they will have to entirely alter the contemporary Architectural culture - starting at its top. The Profession and all of its Institutions will have to be forced (for they will not be persuaded), to abandon this ruined and ruining search for an "Architecture Autre" and, starting with the origins of Architecture in Decoration and its highest ambitions in Urbanity, to develop techniques that actually deliver planned cities with a high cognitive component. But the Public will have to understand that behind every Architect there stands a Client with his cheque-book. The Age of Trash is not "ordered" by an Architect. The Client writes the menu and delivers the shopping. The architect only stirs the pot.*

## **CHANGE NEED NOT MEAN "WORSE" AKA "EVEN MORE TRASHED".**

*The USA threw their whole lifespace into the economic furnace of "re-development" so as to generate the taxes to fund "Star Wars". The trashier a city is the easier it becomes to ruin it and re-build it even trashier still. These 44 Lectures offer an alternative way of generating the same high fiscal revenue. The "Constant City" is a city that gets better every time it is rebuilt. This is because the Legislature does not just write laws. It scripts "iconolects". These 44 Lectures are the best map that I have been able to make to guide the Public on this campaign if it is ever to be waged. It is, in fact, though seemingly scripted as an 'Academic Year', also legible as the old Calendar of the Way of War. After all, Winer, Spring and Summer do not change! Thinking, Preparing and Acting are common to the oxymoron of my title as "The War of the Arts of Peace".*

## **1961 AND THE "FOUR FIGURES".**

*The '44 Lectures' were scripted from 1998 until 2012. The final invention of its bibliology was one of its critical 'victories'. This did not occur until April 2004 when under pressure to communicate with the brush-cut*

***Project Manager of Rodney Holmes, the CEO of the Duke of Grosvenor's one billion pound Central Liverpool re-development. I invented the "incunabula-tabloid" double-page spread of the three narrative streams of densely-captioned images and polychromed text both consummated into thousands of "iconolects". I printed their 1000 pages privately in 2015 after my heart required the fitting of a de-fibrillator and after three years of editing. They are founded on my library of 2000 old books and the work of the firm of John Outram Associates 1974-2009. The span of their ideas stretches onwards from 1961, when I first established a level of semantic congruity (which I termed the "Four Figures"), between all of the 9,000 years of the phenomena denoted 'Architecture'. This included the 'modern' Architecture of Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Buckminster Fuller.***

### ***"CRACKING THE CODE?."***

***My ambition, in which I was not alone during all of this time, was to 'crack' the Architectural code down to a never as-yet attained level of universality. When this was done, it would be possible to build the medium upwards again so that it could never collapse in the way it did during the 20C. However this level went upwards as well as downwards, stretching to infinitudes of physical as well as metaphysical complexity.***

### ***A NEW PHYSICS ADAPTED TO AN OLD CREATURE - MAN.***

***It turned out that structures were not to be designed from their strength but for their flexibility. Modern materials were strong enough for buildings to be enormously lighter. But if too light they would flex and literally bounce - as did Norman Foster's Millenium Bridge. Then it turned out that material creep was more dangerous than collapse. Moreover some materials 'crept' larger, as did brick, while others 'crept' smaller, as did concrete. Brick walls held in concrete frames had a way of bursting off a building. Then the side of a very tall building which was in the sun would get taller than its opposite side in the shade. So upper floors were no longer cubic, but became lozenges. Then draught-proofing and insulation, when combined with internal climatic engineering created the conditions for fungi, parasites and "sick building syndrome". The physics of 'modern' building created several new Engineering Professions, consuming an ever-larger fraction of building costs.***

### ***AN OLD METAPHYSICS ADAPTED TO A NEW CULTURE: URBANITY.***

***All this was bad enough. The metaphysics of Architecture was even stranger. Greek Architecture used to be an accepted origin for the Classical Architecture of the West. But it turned-out that one of the reasons Alexander the Great went to Egypt and then on as far East as India is that he was pursuing that Ancient Greek thirst for knowledge. He was re-tracing the journey of the ideas that constituted Hellenism. Central Asia was the origin of the metaphysics of Classical Architecture just as India was the first inventor of the "pointed arch". that came via the Saracens and France eventually to these remote Northern Islands. The history of West European Architecture no longer served our needs. Even American Post-Modernism proved provincial with its genesis in Italian Mannerism.***

## **NATIONAL GOTHIC.**

*I proposed, after our successful V&A summer exhibition design, in 1994, of "Pugin, A Gothic Passion" to Elizabeth Esteve-Coll, the then Director of this great Museum, that she promote an exhibition to explain this fascinating journey. My idea was suppressed because "Gothic" remained not only the Style of the Parliament of Westminster, but the Royal Style as well. It was (somewhat loosely, but nonetheless firmly), imposed on the rebuilding of Windsor Castle's interiors after the fire of November 1992. Buddhist, Saracenic and French Gothic Architecture were, essentially the "State Style" of Britain. But this tail-end Gothic could not be subjected to any pollutions that would confuse its perfectly English pedigree! Such are some of the heavy political constraints on achieving a scientific understanding of the very ancient metaphysics of this most essential medium.*

## **FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION.**

*During much of this time the best that orthodox English Architectural theory could offer was an entirely fictional and ludicrously optimistic fusion of Architecture with Building on the lines of "Form Follows Function". Good, clean building is good clean Architecture. There is nothing much more to be said concerning English Architectural Theory except to confirm that if it is 'theorised' it is unlikely to be Architecture, and if it is Architecture (at all) it is unlikely to be theorised.*

## **BUYING THE BEST.**

*All of the different so-called "styles" of Architecture, including 'Heroic' Modernism, have been imports. The only one that might be called "native" was High-Tech. Peter Cook, the popular English Educator from the "Nineties to the Noughties" wrote that "Outram's roof-top boiler-house of 1958 was the first time I saw a design that would later be named "High-Tech". Yet by 1960-61 I was out of High-Tech and into Classicism proper. It took, as Charles Jencks wrote, another ten years for High-Tech to 'arrive'.*

## **FRESHLY IMPORTED.**

*I do not find it unreasonable to propose that there is not a single iota of the original metaphysics of Architecture that is native to Britain. Nor is there very much evidence that the metaphysical dimensions of the Architectural imports have taken root in England's metaphysically infertile spirit. Even British Post-Modernism was mainly imported from Pennsylvania rather than directly from Italy, the main territory of its inspiration for the USA.*

## **THE HOME-GROWN "NATURAL" CITY.**

*City-design shares the same meagrely provincial pedigree. The first President of the Royal Town Planning Institute was an arboriculturist. His attempts to plan the first reconstruction of an European city after WW I were easily outclassed. Neither Thomas Mawson, nor his two sons (they were a family business) had any idea how to invent the 'ontic constitution'*

*of a politically coherent community. The Urbanist which Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister, preferred after the Great Fire of Thessaloniki was in the shape of the Beaux-arts trained Ernst Hebrard - an officer serving on the Balkan Front. But the Mawsons could have told him which trees to plant. Subsequent English luminaries of this massively critical Profession have agreed that the "planned" city was an un-natural abomination. Britain, with her long history as bankers to the globe, regards real property as a value above all others. English towns tend to be a physical shambles ensuing from the simple conversion of farming crops on mazy Saxon land-holdings into collecting urban rents from their labyrinthine "development". Even the greatest of British city designs was proven useless as the lifespace of a properly ordered Democratic state. New Delhi is the most incapable of Britain's city designs - a mere planetary universe of princely bungalows orbiting the biggest bungalow of them all - that of the Viceroy of India. Lutyens was a genius as an architect, but of the political and ontic brilliance of France's post-Revolutionary Beaux-Arts city design culture he (like all of his English peers), knew nothing. Nor did Lutyens ever script an interior with anything worth 'reading'. His Vice-Regal saucer domes look like paper doilies.*

### **"FAKING IT".**

*There have been, over the centuries, some amusing essays on Architecture written in the native tongue, But there has never been penned anything one could call a respectable theorisation of the medium that L.B.Alberti called the "paradigm of civilisation". Not that this is surprising when one must admit that not even Florence, Venice, Rome, Naples, Sicily, Spain and all the Latinate South of the Alps, succeeded in a theorisation that could survive the shocks of Newtonian physics, Immanuel Kant and "machine civilisation". If it all collapsed even there then what hope was there that Architecture could survive north of the English Channel? None at all. And so it proved after WWII when every aspect of Britain's richly capable architectural practices were unceremoniously dumped by the Labour Landslide Attlee Administration. It was almost as if, divested of the amazing Empire on which the sun never set, there was no more need to continue to "put on a good show", or as Noel Coward put it in "Easy Virtue": "You're British: fake it!".*

### **BACK TO THE BEGINNING....**

*The idea that the origin of Architecture lies in a darkened interior which is painted on its floor, ceiling and walls with symbolically legible images fills the Nordics with unspeakable dread. The Nordics in their cold, damp, gloomy airs find images "spooky" and cannot employ them in the manner required by Heidegger when he advises that one should "think the truth of Being". The best that they can do is the Hogwarts School of Wizardry. All of England's interior "surface-scriptings" (and certainly since the Reformation), are carefully designed to FAIL in their 'Architectural' function, which is to bring an idea, any idea (an even more terrifying prospect), into epiphanic being.*

## **A THEORY WITH BUILT PROOFS.**

*The 44 Lectures are a Theorisation of Architecture as-found along with its use in creating the Urbane and as a vehicle of epiphanic surface-scripting (aka. Decoration). The reader will find practical methods, with actually-built examples, for all of the theories I have scripted. In the case of Architecture these are named the "Sixth Order", in the case of Decoration, the "Tricorso". and in the case of Urbanity, or City-Design, they are named the "Constant City". I have gladly accepted and employed the radical inventions of 20C Graphics and 20C Architecture where they can add to the power and acceptability of Architecture to invest our built environment with ideas - preferably complex and even contradictory ones. This is a more practical way to approach the restoration of Architecture to its capabilities than a merely fashionable or ideological restriction of the available techniques to those denoted as "Modern". It is this peculiar narrowing of Architectural technique to those suited to the reification of 18C Idealism and its descendants that has crippled this medium, rendered it incapable of both Urbanity, Decoration and even the vehicle central to them both: Architecture itself.*

## **A PUNISHMENT IN STORE.**

*The deliberate denial, to the Generality, especially from the mid-20C onwards, of the powers and capabilities of the Architectural medium will not be easily forgiven by those to whom it has been forbidden.*

## **A NOTE FOR THE YEAR 2018.**

### **BRITISH POST-MODERNISM'S APOTHEOSIS.**

*It should not be thought that Post-Modernism was any sort of act of repentance or reparation. It was, in its American guise (which is the one that was (as with all the previous 'styles'), imported into Britain), a mere cry of pain and despair at the impossibility of any sort of Urbane culture in mid and late-20C USA. American Architects, up until WWII, went to Paris to learn their Architecture. There were, until that date, many very fine architectural essays on her lively streets. More importantly still, the Architects of the USA went to France to learn their area and city design culture. But WWII instilled, especially into Britain, but also into the States, the idea that the "High Architecture" of Classicism led directly to the proletarian dictatorships of Stalin and Hitler. The fragility of Architectural Theory in England had always led to the medium's treatment as a mere 'front' to be assumed when required by social mores. So it was easy to discard the Imperial Beaux Arts and assume the Labour Landslide "Welfare Modern" of Scandinavia.*

### **TAKING LEGAL POSSESSION.**

*Architecture holds a higher status in the US of A. It is bound-up in the moral compulsion to 'develop' the land which the English colonists so successfully appropriated from its aboriginal human occupants. All Eng-*

*lish colonies were designated, legally, a “terra nullius”. They were, legally, without ‘owners’ or legal occupants of ‘real property’. Other conquerors have not been so subtle. Some execute a genocide. Some merely enslave the conquered aboriginals. Nordic Protestants, it seems, need to prove their right of occupation with the rites of the “work ethic” along with those of “real property” by ‘developing’ the territories they conquer. Building, and its metaphysical dimension of Architecture became a somewhat accidental part of this process.*

### **CAN'T CONQUER ANYONE, NOT EVEN ONESELF.**

*Architecture entered this ritual of ‘development’ under the native suspicion of its linguistically and ethnically ex-British leaders. It entered the USA accompanied by the natively English fear of imagery. This guaranteed Architecture an optically trivial status within even the political, economic and lately military colossus of the USA. This low status, and the ignorance it encourages (no one with a top-of-the-class brain is officially encouraged to become an Architect and no state research funds attend the Medium), led directly to the catastrophic fiascos of the 3 trillion dollar failure to ‘pacify’ Iraq and Afghanistan. It also led directly, through the Clinton’s failure to assimilate America’s poor to the mortgage culture, to the 2007-8 economic crisis. After all, what good can it do to shoulder a mortgage when one occupies the shambolic squalor of the American “mid-town”? As Madonna sings “I want more”.*

*Like a “planned city”??*

### **THE “WAR OF THE ARTS OF PEACE”.**

*So this is where we are today, with Trump, Brexit and a major crisis in the Anglo-American cultural hegemony. How is this culture to escape from ruin? It’s no good thinking of going to war to ‘get the people behind one’. That door closed when those blessed nerds in Los Alamos dropped the “Gadget”. Nations are no longer governed by Hegel’s “Warrior Class”. The War now is in the “Arts of Peace”.*

*Move over Boys!*

**End of “An Introduction to  
THE “44 LECTURES”.**

**John Outram.  
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