

VISIONARY ARCHITECTURE

'Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally exists, Really and Unchangeably'. — William Blake.

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AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY

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MUSEUM OF MODERN ART · NEW YORK

Arranged by the Elam School of Fine Arts University of Auckland

INTRODUCTION

KURT VON MEIER

The word 'visionary' today can have frightening connotations. It conjures up as many bogeys and glimpses of hell as suggestions of the Blessed Isles or Elysium. A hundred years ago when the world was swept up in a super-optimistic misinterpretation of Darwin's theory of evolution, 'visionary' would have called forth some image of man in a state of his supposed perfectability or a notion of the universe docile and in its place.

Around the turn of the century Spengler's pessimistic view of 'The Decline of the West' was just a straw in the impending typhoon. For instance, man no sooner got a clear picture of the atom than he began splitting it and making bombs out of the bits and pieces. Now we have H-bombs, guided missiles, germ warfare and teenagers. In addition to a horde of new sophisticated diseases some governments are on the verge of successfully reviving the Black Plague. No wonder that the word 'visionary' makes most people today look for the nearest place to hide.

The literature of our time has also been responsible for this disillusionment. The visionary balloons most often popped are the ubiquitous utopias: schemes for ideal cities or perfect states; and after George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and some of the Science Fiction boys, 'utopia' has become a dirty word, or at least one to make sentimentalists like me shudder. Perhaps needless to say, 'utopia' had somewhat less cataclysmic overtones when it was newer. Sir Thomas More coined the term as the title of his famous book published in 1516, although the notion of an ideal if visionary state goes back at least to Plato's 'Republic'. Hippodamus probably had a visionary plan in mind when he laid out a grid system for the streets

of ancient Miletus. A thousand years later one Isidore of the same city, Miletus, collaborated with Anthemius of Thralles to design the truly visionary basilica of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. It was to visionary schemes of the ancient world such as those of Plato and Hippodamus — both theoretical and actual — that the visionaries of the Renaissance turned.

In the following symposium based on the exhibition, Mr Ardley and Mr Porsolt both refer to the problem of visionary architecture in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and several of the contributors consider more recent examples; but what visionary schemes are to be found in the period between classical antiquity and the Renaissance? Is visionary architecture limited only to periods of 'high culture'?

Perhaps the visionary element in man's mental world is far too basic to be changed utterly by such a phenomenon as the mere collapse of a civilisation. Thus it is not surprising that visionary schemes persist throughout the so-called Dark Ages. Actually, the writings of the mediaeval poets are chocked full of architectural fantasies. In the 'Pelerinage de Charlemagne', the 'Roman de Troie' and the so-called letter of Prester John, in Wolfram von Eschenbach's 'Parzifal' and 'Jungeren Titurel', and in Gottfried von Strassburg's 'Tristan und Isolde' there are fabulous and fantastic temples, throne rooms and chambers of love. These structures were to be built of marble, crystal, precious cloths, tons of gems and so much gold and silver that it gets dull just reading about it. The temple of the Holy Grail, for instance, was so visionary that it was transported by angels to India.

Not all of mediaeval visionary architecture was restricted to literary realisations. In fact the church or cathedral, as the basic architectural endeavour of the whole period, was visionary in a symbolically vital and explicit sense. As Paul Frankl has written: 'In

this connection we should not only think of the significance of the Heavenly Jerusalem for the Early Christian basilica. We know that the Gothic cathedrals sought through the iconographic programs of their sculptures and stained glass to illustrate . . . the image of the universe.' It is just this juxtaposition of literary utopias or fantasies with actual realisations that is one of the most fascinating historical aspects of visionary architecture. In discussing this intellectual division between verbal and visual culture Professor Martin Meyerson of Harvard University and MIT, writes: 'Curiously, these two traditions did not influence each other but developed apart. The literary utopias constructed a desirable future in terms of altered social organisations and institutions. The design utopias portrayed a desirable future in terms of altered artifacts and the organisation of space. The verbal or social utopias, if they have dealt at all with elements of physical environment, have done so but superficially: the forms and interrelations of housing, workshops, facilities for education and recreation, and the distribution of open land, have followed as afterthoughts, alterations in property, in family, in political and other institutions. Conversely, the utopias of visual design have ignored class structure, the economic base and the process of government in the desirable future they present.'

The various contributions to this symposium place different stress upon the verbal and upon the visual, although in some there is equal treatment of both considerations. But this exhibition of visionary architecture has a very non-literary cast; if not all of the schemes are practical, all of them are possible . . . or at least they were **conceived as** being possible — while literary utopias often better serve their symbolic ends by being flagrantly impossible. Even so, the issue of practicality is not always the most interesting one to be raised by these projects, and in some ways, to insist upon the realistic here is like eating raw carrots during the Hallelu-

jah Chorus. But sooner or later, I suppose, we must give some serious thought as to the relevance of such an exhibition to Auckland and to New Zealand generally.

Sooner or later also, one will arrive at a paradox: there is still the conscious tradition of New Zealand's settlement and early history, the vestigial remnants of a true pioneering spirit; and then there is security-minded, apathetic, self-satisfied, conforming and generally anti-pioneering spirit, which will usually be admitted by most citizens (according to their awareness and candour) of this Promised Land. This paradox has some interesting features when applied to architecture and/or visions.

There is a healthy, pioneer willingness to 'do it yourself'. While this may be socially or psychologically creditable, it is architecturally disastrous. Moreover, even if it weren't, building codes, city ordinances, strict controls on both price and availability of materials pretty well cramp any pioneering spirit of architectural promise.

In the population as a whole there seems to be little real interest in any of the fine arts, including architecture. This is in accord with a truly pioneer sense of empiricism and earthy practicality. The trouble of course is that good design, especially in architecture, is not only more practical but almost always more economical (and economy is another pioneer virtue); then too, man lives not by kumaras alone.

When the early New Zealanders first conquered Nature, domesticated the Maori and won time to begin to think about 'style' more than about survival, they turned full face towards Great Britain. In the architecture after about 1900 they proceeded to emulate Europe in almost unbroken display of vulgarity and ostentation. The same thing happened in America but the story is sadder and the loss greater here, because an indigenous style which possessed architectural qualities of some value was beginning to de-

velop in New Zealand. The fine buildings of this vintage that do remain are being pulled down today wherever the speculative builder gets there before the Historic Places Trust.

Just as the original pioneer self-reliance gave way to aping of overseas fashions, today there appears to be another period of indiscriminate importation of overseas 'style' under way as the country passes through the puberty of its own industrial revolution and becomes 'modern'. The almost certain victim of such a policy is anything that might be of true relevance to the fine arts in New Zealand — because it gets swamped and lost in so much rubbish. (But don't think that there was proportionately any less rubbish around when, say, Michelangelo was painting the Sistine Ceiling). However, an even greater tragedy would result if this fadism is allowed to inhibit the growth of New Zealand's own artists and architects, poets and musicians.

The visionary element is quite vulnerable in the individual (see how we manage to kill it in our children). And this is particularly true when society in general is hostile to the visionary. Face it: how much vision is possible in a society whose essential philosophy can be summed up in the phrase 'She'll be right'?

The point of this exhibition is to present the visions of some men who have had the inspiration, and then have had the courage to stand behind it. This could give one heart. This could also suggest that in some way the visionary is useful, or indeed, even necessary to the continued vigour, growth and efficient functioning of society. Visionaries may not always make society more pleasant but they will always be important. Whether the world becomes Utopia or becomes extinct some visionary will probably be responsible. This exhibition was selected by Arthur Drexler of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and was originally shown there in 1960. The visit to New Zealand is part of the exhibition's world tour which is

being sponsored by the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art. Arrangements for the Auckland showing are being handled as a seminar project by third year students of the history of architecture at the Elam School of Fine Arts, the University of Auckland. Local sponsors of the exhibition include the Auckland City Art Gallery, the Auckland branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, the University of Auckland's School of Architecture and Elam School of Fine Arts.

Mr Drexler is currently preparing a volume on visionary architecture based on this exhibition; but this brochure was conceived to serve as an introduction for visionary architecture to New Zealand. It seemed that the very nature of the exhibition would stimulate questions of particular concern to us in the Antipodes, and that intelligent consideration of these questions — published as a symposium — could well add to the value and significance of the exhibition as a whole.

The contributors to this symposium are all from the Auckland area but the scope of their concern is such that their contributions should be meaningful to all New Zealanders, and indeed, to anyone interested in visionary architecture anywhere. Unfortunately, there was no opportunity for a leisurely or intense study of the exhibition before this symposium was brought together, although most of the contributors know certain of the projects well, in addition to having generally a wide and firm understanding of the history of architecture.

As a fitting prelude, the first paper in the symposium, by Professor Kennedy, is based upon his years of experience — both theoretical and practical — in the field of town planning. In considering the exhibition both from a professional and from a wider, more truly humanistic point of view, he raises some specific issues for the architect as well as some fundamental issues about the place of visionary architecture in all our lives.

The paper by Dr Sheppard brings into focus the element of vision in New Zealand's own history. Her fascinating notes on Pemberton's Happy Colony represent something of a 'discovery'; the two plans for the utopian settlement were added by us, and do not form a part of the regular exhibition as lent by the Museum of Modern Art.

Jeremy Beckett is primarily concerned with problems of residential design as he relates visionary architecture to the frame of reference of social anthropology. He gives us a fresh view of just what is involved when housing structure and design are considered in relationship to human beings and their institutions.

I. V. Porsolt writes both as an architectural critic and historian, and as an architect. In 'The Shifting Focus of Vision', he presents a sparkling survey of the visionary element in Western thought and building.

'The Usefulness of Vision' was written in collaboration by A. C. Goodfellow and D. J. Mitchell who are both third year students in Auckland University's School of Architecture. They carefully discuss implications of the term 'visionary' and provide a thoughtful analysis of its significance, emphasising the symbolic function of architecture.

G. W. R. Ardley offers a stimulating background for the exhibition in sketching the tradition of utopian thought and speculation. This philosophical aspect is particularly important because historically visionary architecture has so often involved the designing of structures for an ideal society.

In the final paper of the symposium, W. D. Wilson relates the problems of visionary architecture to the work and to the ideals of a practising architect. He leaves us perhaps to search out implications for our own lives, but certainly to realise that visionary architecture is potentially a great source of inspiration and hope for all the citizens in the City of Man.

ARCHITECTURE AND VISIONS

Robert T. Kennedy

There are few architects, at least amongst those who have imagination and a facility to draw — and he is an indifferent architect who has neither — who do not express their thoughts and day dreams in scribbled sketches on the handiest piece of paper. These sketches are usually quickly consigned to the wastepaper basket but occasionally roughly expressed ideas inspire the architect to develop, extend and elaborate it into the kind of scheme shown in this exhibition. Only powerful ideas powerfully expressed are capable of such development, it is a formidable test of both imagination and intellectual capacity and it is not a design game for architectural weaklings. The designer's imagination is stretched into the realms of fantasy, fantasy in design being most difficult to sustain, and the rules of the game require that the ultimate structural possibilities are explored with understanding. The schemes are such stuff as dreams are made of, not the dreams and visions of the painter but those of the designers of structures, buildings, roads and bridges.

This is architectural space-fiction if you will, but architectural space-fiction that can turn, sometimes disconcertingly, into architec-

tural fact. Visual and philosophic ideas represented in drawings exert an influence on architects and laymen alike, as powerful as ideas embodied in actual buildings. Even when the underlying philosophy of the visionary is denied or heartily detested the images projected by them haunt the memories of the creators of our everyday environment. The technically fantastic becomes technically feasible merely by directing men's minds to the examination of technical possibilities.

And who knows? The architectural space-fiction of today may be with us in concrete, steel, glass or some extraordinary, versatile, new chemical compound tomorrow. Leonardo da Vinci's 'Ideal City' is, in part at any rate, already with us in some of the more recent commercial centres of the New World. Bouleé's vast monumental conceptions, never built, have undoubtedly influenced the designers of Brazil's new capital of Brasília. Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Mile High Skyscraper' may not have been a commercial proposition but it will not be thought altogether incredible in a civilization that can put a man on the moon. Le Corbusier's earlier architectural visions are today being turned into realities, by himself, in his old age, and by his many followers.

So much of our building, so much of our town planning, is lacking in vision, that it is refreshing to look upon the visions of talented and gifted architects. One enters and explores these strange new worlds, sees with what skill and ingenuity they have been put together, tastes the delights or senses the awe and even the terror they can inspire. To do so is to test one's own set of architectural and philosophical values against that of the designer knowing that one can turn at will to a more dull, prosaic, but probably more comfortable daily existence. Like a good play or a good novel these schemes take one out of one's self and one leaves them feeling shaken perhaps, or inspired, but not scoffing at visions that may be possible of realization.

THE HAPPY COLONY

E. A. Sheppard

From 1773, when Hawkesworth's not too faithful account publicised Cook's first and second voyages to the South Seas, there may be said to begin a new era of the European imagination: from now on primitivist theories and Arcadian fantasies seem to have factual sanction — not only in descriptions of new lands and strange communities, but in the more romantic landscapes, judiciously peopled by noble savages, of Parkinson, Hodges, and Webber, the official artists of the three expeditions. From now on the forbidding seventeenth-century image of New Zealand (a legacy from Tasman) is replaced by one of infinite romantic possibility, so that by the turn of the century, the South Seas, not Europe, can be envisaged as the future centre of civilization — 'when New Zealand may produce her Lockes, her Newtons and her Montesquieus; and when great nations in the immense regions of New Holland, may send their navigators, philosophers, and antiquaries, to contemplate the ruins of **ancient** London and Paris, and to trace the languid remains of the arts and sciences in this quarter of the globe'. And a very few years later, the persuasive eloquence of Alexander von Humboldt has won for both the cli-

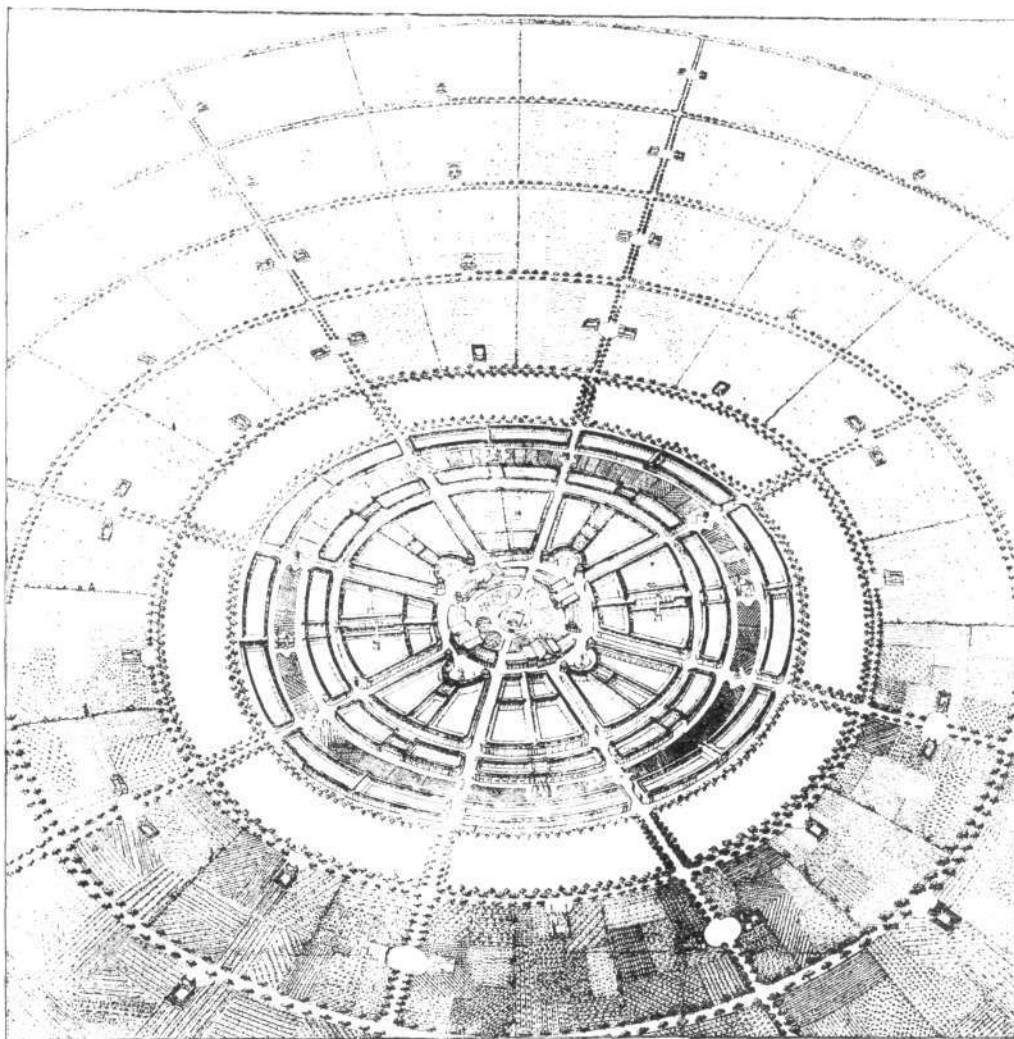
mate and the vegetation of the South Pacific what might be called an aesthetic esteem. All the early travellers to New Zealand, therefore, have their sensibility and their prophetic faculty excited in advance: Augustus Earle in 1827 contemplates 'the glorious prospect of beholding a clever, brave, and, I may add, noble race of men, like the New Zealanders, rescued from barbarism'; and in the same year Dumont d'Urville reflects that the inhabitants of New Zealand, with all their natural advantages, must 'make very rapid progress towards a civilized life, as soon as Europeans or Australians are willing to assume responsibility for the task. . . .'

This is asking for systematic colonization in the spirit of idealism: social experiment in the northern hemisphere coincided with exploration in the south, and one wonders how Robert Owen's settlement of New Harmony would have prospered in the Antipodes. But so far as the question had not already been begged by sporadic settlement, it was Wakefield who brought the confused dream to its perhaps unnecessarily imperfect realization. No perfectly planned 'cities of the future' took shape among the fern and tutu, the hills and swamps — of the Wakefield settlements only Christchurch was planned for spaciousness and symbolic consistency, with a series of broad avenues and the whole of a central square reserved as an ecclesiastical and educational 'close'. An all-inclusive symmetry was not possible on the hilly sites of Wellington, New Plymouth, Nelson and later Dunedin, and the space and symbolism of the ideal Christchurch were in practice sacrificed to expedience. Auckland forestalled its planners. In one secondary Wakefield settlement, a city was symmetrically planned: in 1866 the manuka-and-mud of the Papaioea flat was pegged for a vast Owenite square and a network of broad streets, only to have all pretence of urban coherence bisected by a central railway line. Yet all these townships, large and small, were inaugurated, if not planned, with enormous commercial ambition and an inverted,

destructive romanticism: each civic leader could, like the superintendent of the Manchester Block, see his 'infant town grown into a vigorous manhood . . . while far back in the landscape the dark, rich, melancholy forest will be dimly seen waiting its turn for destruction, and seeming to shrink for protection to the very feet of the distant snow-clad range'.

One only proposal survives for the planned ideal city in New Zealand — Robert Pemberton's 'The Happy Colony', published, complete with the two plans exhibited, in London, 1854. Pemberton had not seen, and as far as one knows never saw, New Zealand; but he confidently proposed that the workmen of Great Britain should purchase two hundred thousand acres of land, to be divided into ten several districts of twenty thousand acres, each district to support a separate society — 'the land to be selected from the most fertile part to be found, say somewhere in the neighbourhood of Taraniki, now called New Plymouth', all to be public property and 'belong conjointly to the Happy Colonists'. Each district is to have its central town which, in defiance of Robert Owen, is to be perfectly round — 'right angles are opposed to the harmony of motion, and in a town there must be motion; therefore the best method for the free circulation of man and beast must be adopted'. In the centre, in the first circle of about fifty acres, is to be situated 'The Elysian Academy or Natural University', and surrounding this area are to be a number of circular belts. 'The roads to be wide, spacious and planted with ornamental trees'; the lands about the town to grow 'every kind of grain' and be planted with 'beautiful orchards', as well as vineyards and olive groves 'if the climate suits'.

Pemberton does not waste much time over economic or legislative details: he must have studied Fourier, though for the most part his social organization is as clearly derived from Owen as his architecture is from Paxton. His real, fanatical concern is with the education



MODEL TOWN FOR THE HAPPY COLONY

To be established in New Zealand by the
Workmen of Great Britain.

Designed by ROBERT PEMBERTON, FRSL

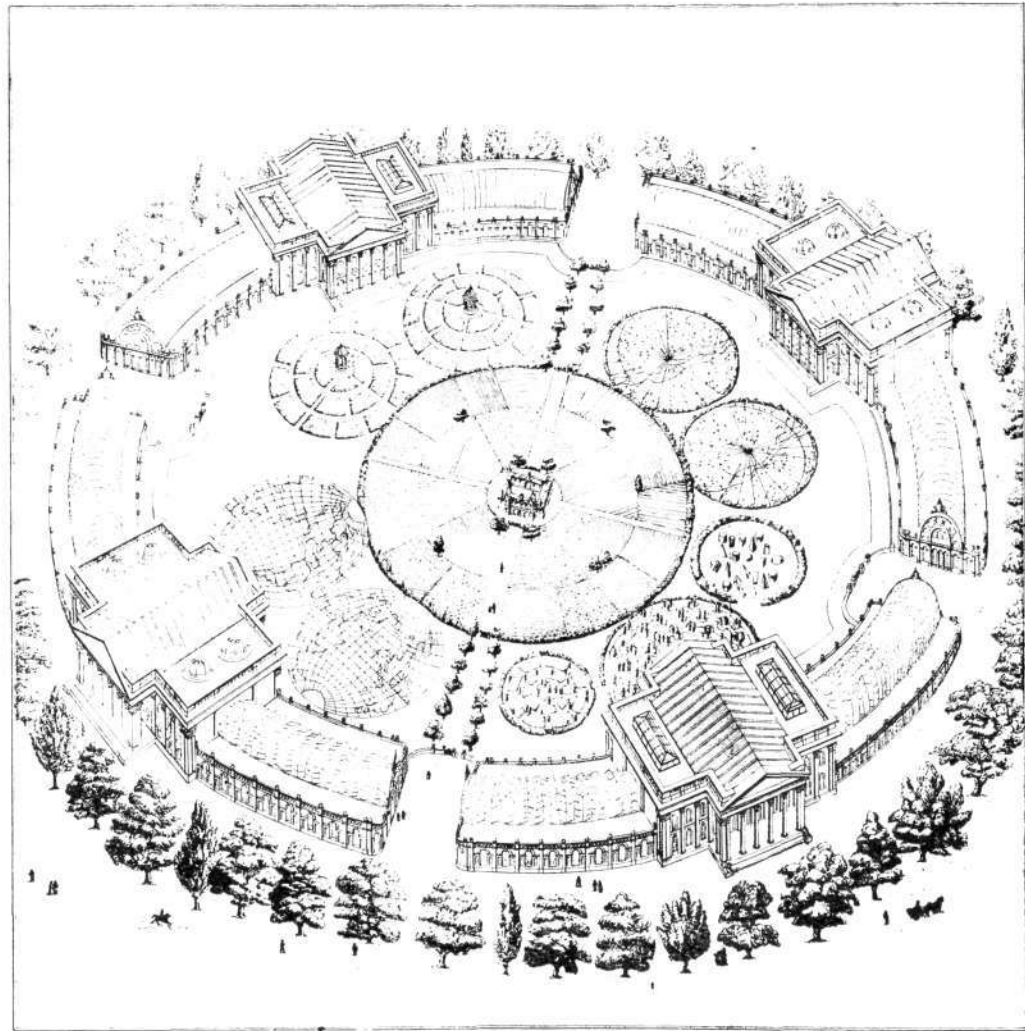
The first circle, an area of fifty acres, contains the four Colleges, with Conservatories, Workshop, Swimming Baths, and Riding Schools adjoining each College; also the educational circles, such as, the Terrestrial and Celestial Maps, laid down on the ground, the groves embodying History, the Muses, Mythology, the Botanic and Horticultural Gardens, the Geometrical Forms, etc., and the miniature farm in the centre. In the second circle are placed the Manufacturies, the Public Horticultural Gardens and Arboretum occupy the fourth circle. The outer circle is the Park, three miles in circumference.

**VIEW OF THE COLLEGES FOR
THE HAPPY COLONY**

To be established in New Zealand by the
Workmen of Great Britain.

Designed by ROBERT PEMBERTON, FRSL

The Colleges placed in the centre of the town, in a circle of fifty acres, showing the Workshops, Baths, Conservatories, Botanic and Horticultural Gardens, the Terrestrial and Celestial Maps, laid out on the ground, the circular groves, embodying History, the Muses, Mythology, the Miniature Farm, etc.



of the Happy Colonist, from infancy onwards. And here he has not been content with Owen's indications, but has gone direct to Pestalozzi (possibly in Edward Biber's translation, published in 1831), and produced an idiosyncratic, absurdly lexical interpretation of 'natural education'. In their first seven years children will learn the **names** of every conceivable object and process, from watch springs to horse shoes, from weaving to shipbuilding, not to mention all the technical terms of all the sciences. They will walk and run 'all over the world', on natural maps of the earth and sea constructed on five acres of ground—a process which will also teach them 'the Latin names of all the plants, whereby they will be prodigiously aided in acquiring the groundwork of the Latin language'. They will learn the terms of astronomy from celestial hemispheres, and history, biography and mythology from statues suitably disposed in circular groves—'until the statues could be obtained, tablets must serve instead'. Education will continue up to the age of twenty-one, in two further stages, which will combine physical training, the acquisition of manual skills, and the study of literature and the arts. Every person will learn to dance and to sing, and from his earliest years will be constantly subjected to the best music. There will be no restriction of occupation

— the only specialists will be 'the most gifted'; for everyone the aim will be a general competence. Nothing has been forgotten except the limits of the natural day.

Pemberton, to conclude, turns with zeal to the practical details of daily living. 'Every house will be amply furnished with cupboards and wardrobes placed against internal dry walls, and with baths and water-closets'. 'As regards the bedding, that will be composed of mattresses— not those hard flock mattresses of the English, but those beautiful wool mattresses that the French make, and which are fresh carded every year'. In the club-houses or eating-houses, public breakfast will 'be provided at eight o'clock, dinner at one, and tea and supper at six'. The Happy Colonists will possess every conceivable amenity—including pleasure boats for a hundred rowers, and a yearly series of seven public festivals—but no hospitals ('The rich in the old countries never go to hospitals, and in the Happy Colony we shall be all rich and well provided for') and no marriage rings 'as in the Happy Colony they will be useless'. All this for a mere half million 'which would be nothing for the workmen of Great Britain to subscribe'. Beside the minutiae of Pemberton's Utopia, Owen's 'superior external circumstances' seem somewhat lacking in picturesque definition.

THE USEFULNESS OF VISION

Andrew Goodfellow and David Mitchell

The field of visionary architecture has been for centuries alluring ground for the genius and the dilettante. It is fashionable to dismiss all work in this field as the fantasy of dreamers and escapists. But to do so is to remain deliberately blind, for the usefulness of vision depends on both the creator and the observer, on the material under consideration, and on the clarity with which it is focussed. These points are crucial if the lunatic daydream is to be distinguished from the probing of the serious visionary. This exhibition relies on photographs and drawings, many of them of probably unbuildable structures. Now few would demand, or even expect, a painter to be able to transform his painting into another medium, but many will attempt to establish the 'buildability' of the works in this exhibition as the criterion by which they should be judged.

Such a criterion, we suggest, is false. Most of these works must be regarded as expressions of ideas rather than actual proposals. There is one degree of removal here: the schemes are not in themselves end-points but graphic statements of the designers' ideas, ideas articulated by their form of presentation. The everyday architectural drawing is a statement of intention, and is made to implement this directly as building. To apply the word 'visionary' to such a scheme, however outré is to debase the meaning of the word. The primary intention of the visionary scheme is to make a statement of ideas. Whether or not these ideas can be realized directly as building is another question, for the essential qualities of the visionary are those of prediction or speculation of the form of things unknown.

Not all works in the exhibition show concern with the same field

of attention. At one extreme is a primary concern with constructional techniques — the work of Fuller and Soleri, related to the 'neotechnology' of the writer Lewis Mumford. At the other is a patent preoccupation with people — the city schemes of Le Corbusier and Kahn.

Two further distinctions can be made. Whatever field of attention has been explored the fundamental attitude is either one of prophecy or comment. The 'prophetic' may be defined as that which is ahead of its time in some respect but would or could be realized. It results from speculation or anticipation of new forms based on existing developments and possibilities. 'Comment' may be defined as that which criticizes, if only by implication, existing or developing conditions. Comment by itself then is not visionary. It may be merely a spectacular exaggeration of existing ideas or forms, an architectural caricature. The peculiar quality of the visionary comment lies in the prophetic form that it takes.

Within this framework certain value judgments can be made of individual schemes. There is however, a further consideration which in terms of architecture is of prime importance: the symbolic meaning of the form presented. Although any scheme may be valuable from a specific point of view, its usefulness will be limited if the result is symbolically inappropriate. The altruistic visionary may overstate the idea of community — the magic mountain becomes a termite hill. The visionary technologist may lose sight of human beings — the Fuller city beneath a dome becomes a bee-hive walled-in by a mechanistic geometry.

It is not sufficient for the observer to be superficially excited by this exhibition. This is no gambol through 'the garden of the creative imagination'. Only after exploring bases and implications can the visionary statement be assessed. On such assessment depends the value of architectural visions.

RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS

Jeremy Beckett

If you were suddenly brought amongst some strange people you would be immediately impressed by the novel design of their houses — whether mere bough shelters, igloos, scrap-iron shanties or ultra-modern steel and glass structures. But if you stayed for a while and started to participate in their daily life you would soon become aware of the much greater importance of the way in which the houses were arranged. For the pattern of settlement provides the physical setting for social life.

The various peoples of the world reveal a rich and fascinating diversity in their residential patterns. Blocks of flats may be peculiar to Western society, but the cave colonies of the Pueblo Indians are very similar in social terms. Some Melanesians build their houses about a square, within the confines of which a great part of life's drama is acted out before the eyes of the community. In some parts of New Guinea and Borneo people live in long-houses, dormitory-like structures, in which families live separated from one another only by the flimsiest of partitions. But Westerners are not the only ones to

seek seclusion. Some primitives prefer the isolation of tiny hamlets or solitary homesteads.

Such patterns of residence are the expression of, and an important means of maintaining a particular way of life, to be lived at a greater or lesser degree of intensity. Man is forever seeking the ideal compromise between his desire for society, the only milieu in which his life can acquire meaning, and his fear of irksome constraints.

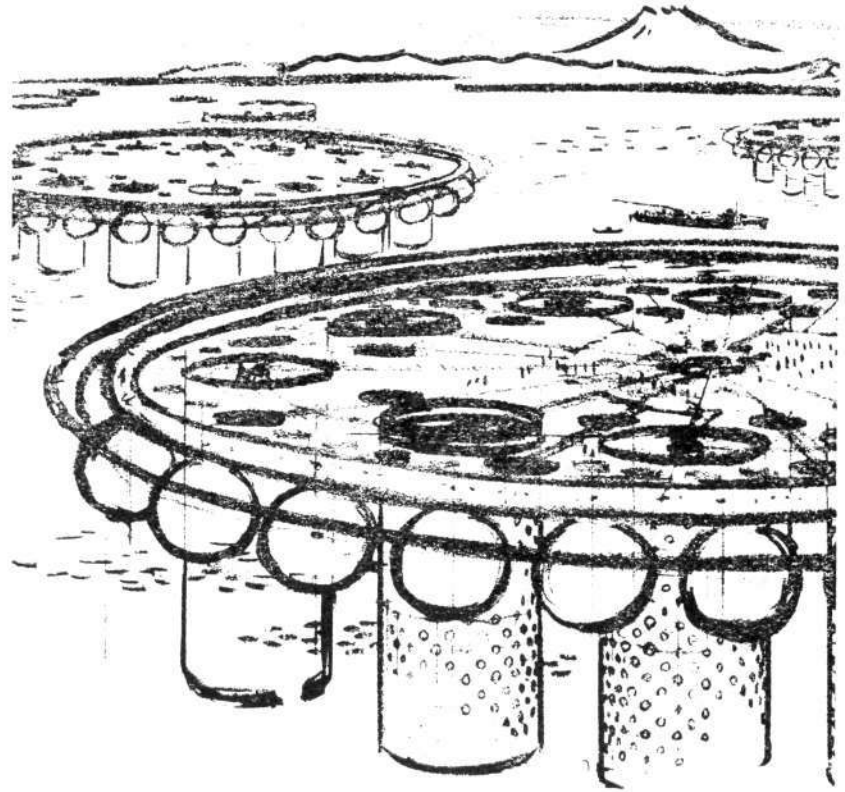
The primitives have, perhaps, one advantage over us, for they are their own town planners, architects and builders. In our society these persons may never live in the settlements they have created, and their decisions are often governed by economic rather than social considerations. Thus, many modern settlements are mere 'housing areas', lacking all facilities for religious, civic and recreational activities.

The cold, sterile term 'housing area' is, indeed, all too appropriate for the centre-less agglomeration of atomized domestic units so characteristic of modern urban development. They are not communities and there are rarely the facilities to enable them to become such.

The modern domestic unit is rarely big enough to accommodate more than a single family; even grand-parents must live elsewhere. Nor is it often possible for kinsfolk and friends to live in the same locality. Thus residential patterns cut across and disrupt rather than facilitate social life.

The greatest of the world's architects and town planners have attempted to create not merely habitations that are aesthetically pleasing, but the physical setting for a more satisfying community life. Sometimes their visions have been too utopian for the ordinary man; more often their plans have foundered on the rock of economic expediency. But if for nothing else, we must applaud their endeavours to restore the primacy of social needs in this field.

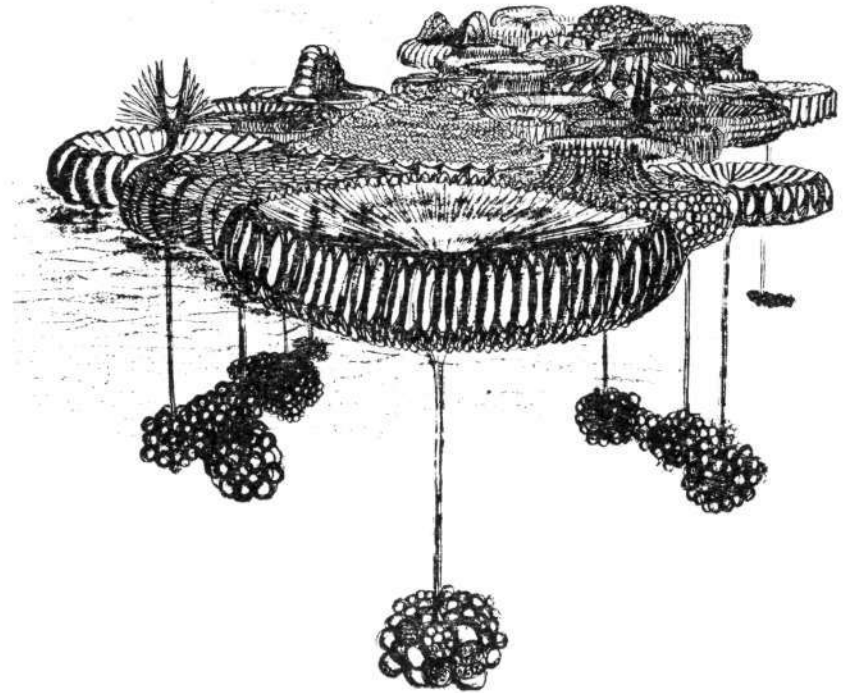
Kiyonori Kikutake — Marine City



'I believe that everybody has only one basic creative idea and no matter how he is driven off, you will find that he will always come back to it, until he has a chance to prove it in purity or die with the idea unrealised'.— Frederick John Kiesler.

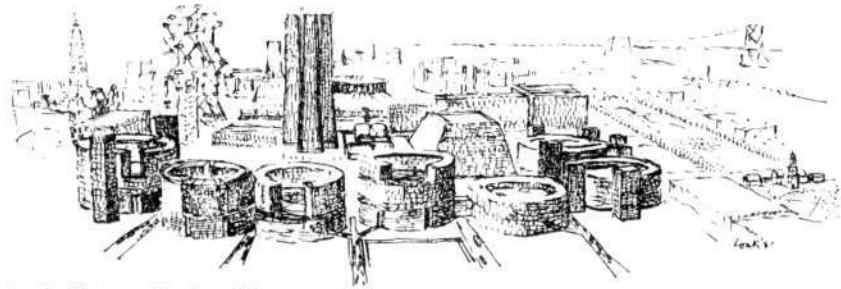


'Violence against nature is violence against man. It is the unconscious envy that makes man destroy everything he cannot equal. Of all the tasks that concern architecture, the one of making an environment in co-operation with nature and in harmony with man is the most urgent. Within the awesome setting of nature, I seek a manly setting: within which . . . we can sense the grace of being and becoming'.— Paolo Soleri.



"I believe that the most ancient tradition of architecture — one which we should conserve at all costs — is that a building should be both honest and beautiful'.— Hugh Ferriss.

'The work of the architect today lies no longer in the making of so-called designs, but in the interpretation of a new social order. He is to be the organizer and the intelligence of the technical and constructive arts'.— Bruno Taut.



Louis Kahn — Centre City

'Our institutions and their programs must be attacked. Architects must give great empty spaces for the institutions — those spaces must be both things of life and ways of life'.—Louis Kahn.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF UTOPIA

G. W. R. Ardley

Men have always had an urge to grasp this sorry scheme of things and remould it nearer to the heart's desire. It is a sound instinct if kept within bounds. Reform, when conducted with wisdom and moderation, is the indispensable means by which human societies are kept fresh and vital. Genuine progress consists in ceaseless reform whereby the eternal verities are realized in ever new ways. But when the urge for change becomes introverted, when it slackens its grasp of the realities of the human situation, when it loses touch with history, when it becomes a doctrinaire obsession, then we have the antithesis of true reform. Instead of progress we have arrestment. Instead of opening the way to yet further vistas of creative change, we have the stillness of a supposed perfection. The mark of a utopia is that it is finished and dead.

It is impossible to draw any sharp dividing line between a scheme for life and a pattern for utopia. The same plan may mean different things to different people. What matters is not so much the plan in the abstract, as the way in which it is implemented as an instrument of practical policy. Ideal schemes for government, for education, for economics, for architecture, for town-planning, have been advanced since the beginning of written history. As ideals giving orientation to modest practical efforts at the mundane level they have often been beneficent. As blue-prints to be literally produced on earth they have been disastrous and tyrannical; the more comprehensive the plan,

and the more efficiently it has been carried through, the more frustration and misery it has produced. Large scale utopian schemes then, in practice, are short-lived fiascos. They all presuppose that men are inherently more perfect or more docile or less restless than they are in fact. When the initial exhilaration of entering a brave new order has spent its force, things lapse back into the old confusion now worse confounded.

The symptom of a utopian scheme is exclusive concentration on abstract reasoning, depreciation of concrete facts, and contempt for history. Philosophers like Descartes, and social reformers like Bentham, are prime examples of utopian planners. The perfection of mathematics is always the allurements for men of this type: they strive excessively for the certainty and order of mathematics in matters where that kind of abstract perfection is unnatural. On the other hand, in moderation, the experimental introduction of mathematical order into such delimited fields as architecture and town-planning, can be a great success. The elegant baroque cities of Europe, with their perfectly proportioned squares and building facades, are the outcome of an enthusiasm for the mathematical genius of Pythagoras, Archimedes, and their Renaissance disciples. These ventures were not utopian, because the planners had the good sense to know when to stop; they did not extend their principles beyond the limited field where they were fruitful. Modern exact science took its rise from the same taste for the elegant; and when confined to its natural bounds, it is one of the most valuable ornaments of the modern world.

Utopias are good servants, but bad masters. It is an easy matter to think out a utopian scheme; the real test comes when we try to use it. There the mere 'intellectual' fails badly. Let us then find a place for our imaginative dreamers. For they are a leaven in society. But let us never take them too seriously.

THE SHIFTING FOCUS OF VISION

'Heilig halte die Ekstasen' — Christian Morgenstern.

I. V. Porsolt

Whether it was Brunelleschi's crossings, Filarete's Sforzinda, Rabelais' Thélème Abbey, or Michelangelo's mighty dome, the powerful vision of the central plan, of the rationally ordered universe in effigy, gave them all their meaning and punch — an idea that must have been brewing for a long time if one remembers Chaucer's description of a 'theatre' in the 'Knight's Tale', a circle complete with major and minor axis. Interpreted as the expression of the newly-found dignity of the individual, this central plan theme must have been rather a collective effort, applicable without copyright by all comers, in any location and for any purpose. Man could be inscribed into a circle as Leonardo has shown. Two hundred years after Chaucer, Palma Nuova was built, the first 'realization'. Another two hundred years later, the face of the earth was dotted by further realizations, the fortress towns of the Vauban school, and after another two hundred years, nearly, one of these, Theresienstadt, became Hitler's model

ghetto. But are we to blame Filarete for the misfiring of his brave shot?

The visionary quality of a design does not consist of its impracticability. The Baroque, for instance, has remarkably few fantasy schemes precisely because its fantasies were realised. Michelangelo's Campidoglio was built, after all, and even his dome came to life again, by Bernini's forceps intervention. Wren was not permitted to build his Great Model design, but lived to use it, defiantly, on the west towers of Saint Pauls' and if his splendid vision of city-wide responses was frustrated at street level, he still managed to rescue it above main cornice level, in the responses of his spires. Every Baroque architect was free to realize his visions, above the main cornice anyhow, in paint if necessary. It was not (as Kaufmann suggests) the inherent contradictions of the Baroque formal system that put a stop to these visions — but the gathering of revolutionary clouds. Not the architect, but the taxpayer got tired of them.

There was a sudden new blossoming of visionary architecture on the publishing level towards the end of the eighteenth century, and it had two facets. There was Piranesi with his retro-baroque nostalgias ('Prisons'—!) and there were Boullée and Ledoux and Gilly with their visions of a new and austere grandeur, a Jacobin Baroque, a sentiment that helped to bring about but took no part in making bloody revolutions.

Nor did visionary architects take any part in making the sooty revolution. Neither barricades nor railway stations are visionary architecture. They are ad hoc, and the nineteenth century went on ad-hocking solidly, under the shimmering haze of Romantic, i.e. non-architectural visions. William Morris was no architect; and one wonders if Pugin was one.

Contemporary architecture, however, begins with visions. There is simply no end to the visionary material issuing from Le Corbusier's

pencil and pen. Gropius envisions not only a way to produce architecture but also the way to produce architects to produce it. But, to my mind at least, it was Mies who conceived and built 'the' architectural vision of the mid-century, Farnsworth House. And if I attempt here a tentative definition of visionary architecture as a general rather than particular statement, an architecture without flesh and blood but with the bones all in the right position, an architecture of anywhere, divorced from the ground because it can stand on any ground, then readers may see how fully Farnsworth House answers this description. Wright's Broadacres don't seem to fit into the definition but they don't fit into any definition.

Buckminster Fuller's visionary house revives once more the theme of the centrally anchored polygon of Sforzinda. At the centre, where Filarete placed his House of Vice and Virtue, that medieval-practical university-cum-brothel, bio-technician Fuller puts a structural septic tank. Fuller's dome found its way into military use even quicker than Filarete's star. And if and when our race will have to cut its last connection to this earth and thus become fully visionary in the sense of my definition, I am sure the space capsules which will become its homes will be Dymaxion. May that day never dawn.

THE VISIONARY ARCHITECT AND THE CITY OF MAN

'Fundamentally, there are only two types of man-made beauty: the beauty which expresses function and the beauty which expresses hope' — Berger.

W. D. Wilson

Next to language the city has been the great civilizing medium. It has been at once the symbol, the embodiment and the prime means of development of man's vision of himself and of the world. From the hierarchic processional village of the African Baluba to the lotus-leaf Padmaka of the Hindus, from the Greek polis to Howard's 'Garden City', every civilisation has visualised the ideal city which is the image of its own perfection. What now appears remarkable is that the built towns so often and so nearly realised the vision, although increasingly in the last 200 years the city of architectural vision has been a fantasy incapable of realization.

The African village is laid out in strict accord with the magical-religious concepts which define for its inhabitants an otherwise meaningless world. Aristotle asks that the polis provide for 'the largest number which suffices for the purposes of life and can be taken in at a single view'; and so firmly was this image in the Greek vision that when a population exceeded a given number a new polis was founded. The beautiful inner courtyards of the Islamic town belie the narrow streets and plain outer walls which define its generally aggressive but vital appearance. It is a protest against the conditions

imposed by a hostile Nature. The square walled cities of ancient China grew inwards (square because the earth was square) towards the square Altar of the Earth at the centre. In the mediaeval town, where 'elective affinity' displaced blood relationship, was the beginning of voluntary association and of community as we know it. All were built to accord more or less exactly with the image of the city which each civilisation cherished as a major part of its vision of itself. While each city image represented for a civilisation the ideal, it was an ideal capable of approximate realisation. In other words, the image of an ideal city grew from a particular conception of reality. It was an image of both 'the beauty which expresses function and of the beauty which expresses hope'. Only now, when the technical means to hand are such as would have been to our predecessors unimaginable, has the visionary architect confined himself to concepts that are almost always unrealisable. If it is not surprising that architects so equipped should now be concerned with images of the ideal city, it is surely remarkable that they should be preoccupied with dreams that must remain forever dreams. What has changed that explains this paradox? Discounting that which is merely sensational, a matter of publicity, perhaps we may find in this exhibition some signs of, if no answers to, the nature of the dilemma of the architect in our time.

The architect of vision, aware of the great powers for good, for human satisfaction, which new knowledge and new techniques offer so clearly, and frustrated by the failure of our civilisation to use them fully and imaginatively, or to use his own talents in any efficient and meaningful way, protests. He protests at the fractionalised values of the world he lives in and seeks in his own vision, a unified concept of the world. Alienated from his true function and from that vital communication with his fellow men which is a necessary condition of all great works, he tries to draw our attention to his vision

by a grand gesture which only too often becomes gross exaggeration. He escapes (like the contemporary painter) from the frustrations of his society, and too, from the knowledge of his contributory responsibility for that frustration, into a world where he is responsible only to himself; or, more precisely, only to the act of architectural imagining, as if it were a good in itself. He then makes good his escape by blaming the world for its failure to recognise the value of his private vision and for its failure to build it.

Where Penther said, knowing that streets could be made in fact both straight and wide, 'the wider and more straight a street the more beautiful it is', the contemporary visionary imagines his city in or under the sea, or as a vast pyramid, knowing even as he protests and exhorts us to action, that it will never, and probably never could be built. To the extent that he has not resigned completely from the human condition, our visionary architect has the final pleasure of relief that the world will not build his Frankenstein Monster.

But some residue of his vision remains to corrupt both him and us, to distract us from the real tasks at hand. He finds the real world unmanageable, too untidy, too restless, chaotic, too exuberantly various. Unlike Van Gogh, in not having the patience of the ox he wants to tidy us up at one fell swoop, to mould us nearer to his heart's desire. Most of modern architecture still bears the sterilising imprint of this abstract vision.

We for our part encourage him. We, too, suffer the frustrations of possibilities unrealised for reasons that seem always unconvincing. We, too, are the guiltless victims of our own situation. 'Perhaps our obsession with genius, as opposed to talent, is an instinctive reaction to this problem, for the genius is by definition a man who is in some way or another larger than the situation he inherits'. Does this explain the vivid fascination for us of these visionary but escapist images? It is true that some of the men whose visions

are here displayed are undoubtedly men of genius, and it is probably true that all those represented aspired to be thought so. But is it true that their genius lay in these 'visionary' set-pieces rather than in the realised works of their normal concrete experience? Is this 'visionary architecture' of the 20th century not a kind of science fiction, while the real story is being written by the visionaries of other media who **are** realising their fantastic dreams daily?

The real problems of the modern city are profound and are concerned with the very bases of the human condition. The outstanding problem is to find a method of restoring, retaining and enriching human or social values in all their vitality and variety, in the world that is and that is possible. It is true that we must 'rid ourselves of our survey-mania and of that perversion of the democratic spirit which contents itself with self-denying reliance upon "what people think" and "what people want".' But it is also true that we cannot create communities to order. A community must grow.

The true visionary architect of the future will not be concerned for his own sake, with buildings a mile high, or cities that are bridges, pontoons or pyramids. He, perhaps leading a skilled team, will be concerned to work in all those media and techniques which together can establish the conditions in which human life will best flourish. His work will not be visionary in the sensational sense. It will grow from the social and personal conditions of everyday life and it will display 'a quality of patience and a lofty ordinariness that set it apart from the work of those who aim only at success'.

He will recognise that 'art is a means of moving the greatest possible number of men by communicating to them a privileged vision of our joys and sufferings', and he will see architecture, his own medium, as the means of constructing an environment in which the communication of this vision more easily happens, both 'the beauty which expresses function, and the beauty which expresses hope'.

'Tired of the emptiness and sterility of the irregular forms, I have passed to the study of the regular. . . . These captivate by simplicity, regularity and reiteration.— Etienne Boulee.

'The true visionary project usually combines a criticism of society with a strong personal preference for certain forms. In the past such projects were unbuildable for one or both of two reasons: they may have been technically impossible to execute at the time they were designed, or society could find neither justification nor the money for the construction. Today virtually nothing an architect can think of is technically impossible to realise. Social usage, which includes economics, determines what is visionary and what is not . . . visionary projects, like Plato's ideal forms, cast their shadows over into the real world of experience, expense and frustration. If we could learn what they have to teach, we might exchange irrelevant rationalizations for more useful critical standards. Vision and reality might then coincide'.— Arthur Drexler.

ARCHITECTS AND PROJECTS

DaVinci, Leonardo	Ideal City
Filarete	Skyscraper
Sant' Elia, Antonio	Railroad Terminal and Hydro Electric Station
	Designs for the City of the Future
Piranesi, Giovanni	Academy and Civic Centre
Boullée, Etienne-Louis	Cenotaph for Isaac Newton
Ferriss, Hugh	The Metropolis of Tomorrow
Unknown	Mountain City
Entwhistle, Clive	Civic Centre and Crystal Palace
	Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ The King
Poelzig, Hans	Festival Hall, Salzburg
	Friendship House, Istanbul
Mazet, Jean Claude	Ideal City
Soleri, Paolo	Mesa Biotechnic City
	Theological Centre of Biotechnic City
	Long Span Concrete Bridge

Korda, Vincent	Stage Set — Things to Come
Taut, Bruno	Alpine Architecture
	The Valley as a Blossom
	The Crystal House in the Mountains
	Rocky Sites in Tyrol and The North Italian Lakes
	The Valley With Waterfalls
	The Crystal Mountain
Doesburg, Theo Van	Group of Skyscrapers
Finsterlin, Hermann	Ideal Building
Lissitzky, El	Der Wolkenbugel
Khan, Louis	City Tower
	Center City
Fuller, Buckminster	Partial Enclosure of Manhattan Island
Webb, Michael	Office Building and Side Elevation
Kikutake, Kiyonori	Marine City
Katavolos, William	Chemical Architecture
Wright, Frank Lloyd	A Civic Center for Pittsburg
	Mile High Skyscraper
Le Corbusier	Combined Road and Building for Rio de Janeiro
	Combined Building and Road for Algiers
Malcomson, Reginald	Metro Linear City
Kurokawa, Noriaki	Agricultural City
Nelson, Paul	Suspended House
Fitzgibbon and Sides	Bridge City
Kiesler, Frederick	Endless Theatre
	City in Space
	Endless House

VISIONARY ARCHITECTURE

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When the work is completed the beginning must be felt.
I recall the beginning as Belief.
It is the time of realization of Form.
It is feeling as religion and thought as philosophy.
There is no material, no shape, no dimension —Louis Kahn.

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