

Architecture is an art as well as a life taking form

by **W. J. Neil Alles (Architect)**

As an art it is clear that there are several things about architecture. That makes it very different to that of sculpture and paintings. The most obvious difference is that a building must serve practical purposes. The architect can do nothing, until a client is ready to pay the cost of building. The client comes not to obtain a work of art, but to get a house, factory, office building, hospital, or school that can be put to use. He is willing to make his building a "work of art" as well if he can be sure that this will not cost money or interfere with practical workings. The fear of those possibilities leads many clients to seek out architects who minimize their creative role as artists.

Every architect must of course be a practical man. His client needs him as an expert in functional planning and in the technology of building, and it is these aspects of his work that lead to buildings that work well and last well. Faults in these parts of an architect's work are the faults that any sensible man can discover and criticize, and we have all heard jeers at architects who have forgotten a stairway or door, or whose buildings develop cracks and leaks.

Architects, theorists, and laymen all agree that no building can be considered a good piece of architecture if it has serious faults of either functional or structural sort. Because of the complexity of modern building and somewhat primitive nature of our building methods, no large building can be without some minor defects when it is first completed. It is a mistake to say that an architect is incompetent just because of some leaks and cracks when a building is new. If there are major problems that cannot be corrected or if buildings actually sag or collapse, we are quite justified in saying that it was an architectural failure, quite aside from whether we like or dislike the design.

Similarly, good architecture means skilful functional planning. Spaces must be the right sizes and shapes and must be located with regard to problems of circulation, communication, privacy, and orientation. Suitable lighting plumbing, must be provided for. Most houses built by speculative builders are badly planned, yet their owners are quite satisfied with this planning. We are only justified in calling the planning "bad" because it is so easy for any trained architect to discover hundreds of improvements that could be easily made without any additional cost.

The planning of majority of modern buildings probably falls into a middle area, good enough to keep owners and users from protesting, but actually not nearly as good as the work of the most expert of architects. We must also remember that the uses of buildings may change as time goes by so that many plans which were excellent for the program established when the building was new turns out to be unsatisfactory years later.

The best planning includes some study of predicted future changes and to provide for these, but all predictions are subject to question. The architect of an airport terminal can-

not know what conditions will be like in fifty years, since no one can guess that far ahead what will happen to transportation equipment. He can only try to make his building flexible in the hope that it will not become obsolete almost before it is finished as has so often happened with this particular architectural type.

Good plan and structure are all we ask of the building projects of technical men such as highway engineers or the structural engineers who design some factories or bridges that is often all that a client asks of an architect. But the architect himself other, architectural critics, and sensitive and intelligent laymen expect more. They recognize that architecture is an art as well as a craft and they expect a building to be a work of art. Only the best buildings really deserve this description. But the possibility exists every time anything is built. Anyone can recognize that greatness of many famous historic buildings is not just the result of their doing their job and standing up well.

A pyramid a Roman amphitheater, or a cathedral are great for reasons that go beyond their doing an adequate job being a tomb, a stadium, or church. Not many modern buildings deserve to be mentioned in the same breath with such historical examples, but some do, and these are the buildings that demonstrate that architecture can be an art whenever the architect has the necessary ability and determination.

If asked why architecture is considered an art, most people would probably say it is because a building should be beautiful. While this answer has a certain superficial validity, it does not satisfy the more thoughtful theorist. After all a bridge, a ship or an airplane can be beautiful also, but designers specialized in those fields are not considered to be artists in the same way that architects are trying to make a building beautiful is not a very effective way to get good architectural results.

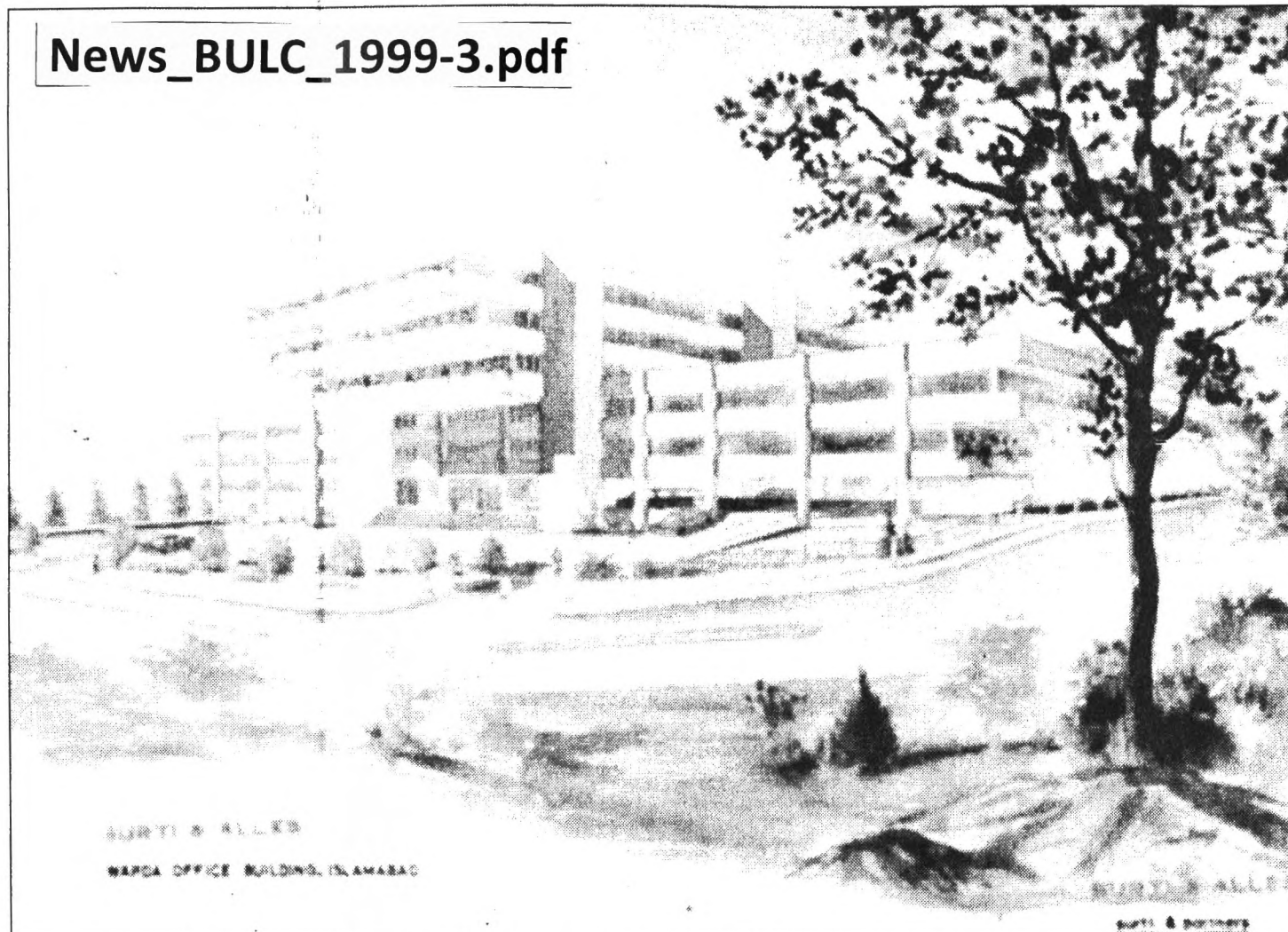
The architect does not work in solid masses; indeed, a solid building would have very little use. The only important historic buildings that are almost solid are the Egyptian pyramids and it is not unfair to say that they are more sculptural than architectural in concept.

It is interesting to notice that the art that deals only with outdoor space is given the name of landscape architecture in recognition of its similarity to architecture.

Architecture itself however, deals with interior space also, and it is clear that the most exciting and interesting buildings are always those with exciting interior space concepts. Nothing could make more clear the central role of the interior designer in the field of architecture than the realization that it is the interior spaces that are most central to the expressive possibilities of the art.

Having said this much about what architecture is it might be useful to try to describe how an architect goes about designing a building. It is usually his client who initiates the process by having a specific need that leads him to an architect. The client requires house, a factory, a shop a school or some other building to supply a specific need. The best architect always manages to be equally successful in solving practical and technical problems, and visual, expressive, and psychological ones - the solu-

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tion of which makes a great building a great work of art.

Who is a chartered architect?

A. Charter - The Webster's dictionary defines the term 'Charter' - A document restoring certain rights and privileges, an act of incorporation, a written permit for the establishment of a body or society, lease, an agreement, a contract to hire or establish by charter to hire by contract.

B. Charter - General opinion - the Charter is a Royal term, Royal is pertaining to king of a crown (Webster's dictionary) The term is British. Professionally where architecture is concerned, the Royal Charter originated in Britain. No professional at the Royal Institute of British Architects call him/her self "A Royal chartered Architect" they call themselves as Chartered Architects".

C. Chartered Architect - Hence a Chartered

Architect is a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (R. I. B. A.) or a member of the Royal Australian Institutes of Architects (R. A. I. A)

D. Royalty means "A percentage for the use of patent or copy- right (Webster's Dictionary) The R. A. I. A. pays a percentage to R. I. B. A. for the use of this patent of copyright the term "Chartered Architect"

E. I Believe that no other architectural body in the world has the right to use the term chartered architect without the written permission from the Royal Institute of British architects (R.I.B.A.) The Institute which has the patent copyright of it in accordance with royalty.

F. The Sri Lanka Institute has no such written permission from R. I. B. A. but locally awards a Charter (Local Charter) which I believe is legally challengeable and misleading the people by trying to imitate the R. I. B. A Charter.

G. Therefore I request the Sri Lanka Institute of Architects to enlighten the people to get a clear picture of the local charter in relation to your constitutional by-laws and define the difference between R. I. B. A. Royal Charter and Sri Lanka local charter.

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1. The R. I. B. A. runs a client's advisory service (CAS) which helps you choose a suitable Chartered architect in Sri Lanka by writing to the following address.

2. The Client's Advisory Service Royal Institute of British Architects, 66, Portland Place London Win 4 AD England.

3. Refer R. I. B. A. International Directory of Practices of British Council in Sri Lanka.