

Edward Durrell Stone's

Modern Architecture on the Campus*

How O.U. Builds

O.U. buildings are going to be around for a long time; they must be pleasing, delightful to see; they must wear well. Add to this the basic theme of function and you have the foundation upon which University Architect Richard N. Kuhlman has designed 12 new campus buildings, supervised 12 others since 1948, in addition to major remodeling projects.



To keep the new athletic dormitory, Washington House, from looking like a big brick box, Kuhlman brought the varying angles of the sun to play on several different planes not immediately visible to the layman's eye. The light and shade giving this building its depth is in reality the element that makes architecture.

EDWARD DURRELL STONE has drawn national praise as "one of the profession's freest spirits and by general consensus the most versatile designer and draftsman of his generation." His most notable building designs stretch from the 1939 Museum of Modern Art to the U. S. Embassy in New Delhi and the U. S. Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair. A believer in the modern principles of structure, he has a love of enrichment and decoration which sets him apart from the "glass box school." Stone has to his credit many educational buildings including those at Stanford, Vanderbilt, Mohawk Valley Technical Institute, and the universities of Arkansas, Chicago and South Carolina. Here he answers critics of the addition of modern buildings to our "traditional" campuses.

ARCHITECTURE is not like millinery; we shouldn't change it just to be fashionable. Yet to me it is encouraging that most of our colleges and universities are changing to beautiful contemporary buildings, in place of the once-popular "Collegiate Gothic" or the nondescript structures that we could label "Ugly American."

To use a much-banded and abused word, the contemporary architect conscientiously tries to produce "functional" buildings. (Whether he succeeds or not is another question.) He tries to plan practically, so that his structures will be suitable to their proposed uses. He does not like to warp his buildings to meet some preconceived design idea.

This point of view is beginning to prevail on campuses in all sections of America, where formerly buildings were often constructed as "monuments" rather than as places where education was to take place, and where the architect was restricted by an accepted design style. Look at the designs for Brandeis University and those for Wayne State University in Detroit, and at the progressive campus done by Frank Lloyd Wright at Florida Southern College. Even campuses that we think of as "traditional" are no longer so. Yale, which has always had a Gothic tradition, now has modern buildings: a fine arts building and an ice-hockey rink. The University of Chicago, for which I am presently doing a continuing education building, has seen fit to forget its Gothic tradition. The graduate school at Harvard, by Gropius, is a radical departure from that university's colonial traditions. In fact, I know of no campus where a rigid style commitment now prevails.

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As my colleague Walter Gropius has pointed out, we don't expect students to go about in period clothes—so why should we build college buildings in pseudo-period design? Like Mr. Gropius, I believe that students reflect their surroundings, and that the appearance and the feeling of one's surroundings make a great deal of difference. If our future architects and future citizens are educated in environments of beauty, perhaps they will go to bat for beauty later in life. (It is no secret that beauty is a scarce commodity in America, one of the few things we can't seem to afford in our land of abundance.)

Architecture, when well done, can create a mood and inspiration. It has done so through the ages. Religious buildings, for example, have inspired religious fervor in their congregations. So it is with a college building: here you can create an atmosphere which is conducive to study and to work, and which produces rapport between teacher and student.

Indeed, the mood may vary with the building. If you are working in a laboratory, you want that laboratory to be like a machine, beautifully equipped and immaculately finished. In a library you want something that gives you a relaxed feeling—an oak-paneled room, carpeting, comfortable chairs, good light, and even an open fireplace.

Even though I am heartily in favor of the encouragement of modern architecture on the American campus, I think that we architects have an obligation to blend the new with the old. This can be done in three principal ways.

First is the matter of scale. When I say scale—it is an architectural term—I mean size and proportion. If a campus is made up predominantly of three-story buildings that are, let us say, 100 to 200 feet long, then the new buildings should be relatively the same size.

The second thing to consider is the material that is used, and the color. If a campus was started in a material such as brick or stone, then if possible the same material should be used for the modern buildings. If not the same material, certainly a harmonizing color can be used.

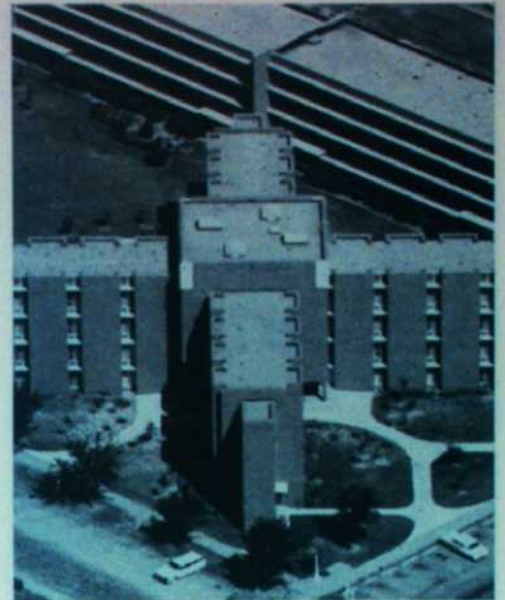
The third great unifying force is the grouping or arrangement of the buildings. Fortunately, many colleges were started on the quadrangle plan—an ideal grouping for educational buildings. The quadrangle is in effect an outdoor room that unifies a group of buildings, even though they may differ individually in architectural design.

Of this kind of planning, the best example I know of is Harvard. Harvard has adhered to the quadrangle idea; it has used, by and large, the red brick of the original buildings; but it has changed the style as tastes have changed. There are buildings in the Harvard Yard by Richardson in the Romanesque style; there are buildings in the classical revival style by McKim, Mead, and White; there are even Victorian buildings. But because they are placed around quadrangles, towered over by gigantic elms, they are harmonious.

It is highly desirable for a college campus, which is to last hundreds of years, to report the changing tastes of the times. If we look to Oxford and Cambridge, we see a record of this changing history of architecture; yet they are so planned and unified by size, materials, and arrangement that everything ties together. And that's my preference, rather than to saddle the architect and the institution with a preconceived idea of style.

In designing the medical school and hospital at Stanford—which represents my own current tastes and prejudices, if you will—I tried very hard to meet the conditions of blending the new with the old. The site was adjacent to an old quadrangle of low, three-story buildings designed by Shepley, Rutan, and Co-

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In designing a dormitory, the room comes first, then the grouping of these rooms. Each room in the new Cate Center divides naturally into two areas, while the X-shaped building itself is actually four houses in one. Such construction is more economical and easier to manage yet maintains four identifiable units.



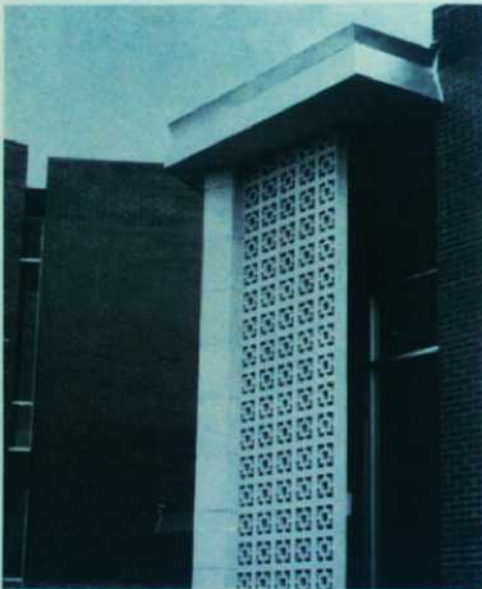
The central theme of the forum building at the Center for Continuing Education involves translation of such intangibles as democracy and free speech. This purpose was accomplished by keeping people using the facilities face to face through skillful room design, placement of platforms, seating arrangements and design of the chairs themselves.

Modern Architecture

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Functionally, the Journalism Building design had to allow for more than 50% of the school's activity (related to newspaper production) on the first floor near the press. In appearance it had to blend with existing surroundings and provide for architecture in the space left, to be occupied by other buildings in the master plan.



The Continuing Education Center dining hall had to be large yet flexible enough for any size conference group. Three hexagons were joined to form the hall which can be divided by folding doors. This arrangement makes possible either restaurant or cafeteria style serving or both at the same time for separate groups in separate areas.

ledge, in the tradition of Richardson. I felt that I was working in very distinguished company and that my building should be sympathetic with its predecessors. As a result I made a horizontal hospital—a low, three-story building—which is rather unusual for a 400-bed hospital in this day. All the rooms are directly related to landscaped gardens, which in turn are tied in with the beautiful landscaping and fine live oak trees on the 7,000-acre campus.

Because of the earthquake problem in that area of California, we thought it desirable to use poured concrete. To make the concrete texture sympathetic with the rough stone of the earlier buildings, and to lend an air of permanence as well, I hit upon the idea of putting within the forms a geometric pattern. This was done by nailing wooden blocks in the forms and then pouring in the concrete, much as you would pour dough into a waffle iron. The result, I believe, is beautiful and exciting—and I hope I have caught the essence of the older buildings, without either copying or ignoring them.

Using surrounding buildings as a point of departure, I find that I can ask myself: What makes this building unique from all others? If I can find the salient characteristic, I believe there is a much greater chance of doing an original, creative work. In other words, if I am working on a campus that is predominantly red-brick colonial, I try to create something original and contemporary, but which retains some of the qualities that made the colonial structure attractive—capturing the spirit, you might say.

Although my tastes in architectural design have changed since 1950, I have always been happy with the fine arts center at the University of Arkansas. Here is a unique college building, with all the arts— theater, music, painting and sculpture, architecture—under one roof, capturing the spirit of art and serving as an inspiring educational institution.

I have also been concerned with the question of uniqueness of function in designing the center of continuing education at the University of Chicago, to be completed in 1961. Behind it is the theory—and it is a very reassuring one to a man of my age—that one doesn't stop learning. To provide a place where men can return to the campus to live and work in a highly intensive manner for a limited period, I have combined a classroom building, a hotel, and a conference-room building in a simple, unified, rectangular plan.

Too often, I am afraid, contemporary architects use the excuse of "functionalism" to indulge their current enthusiasms. We are all guilty of enthusiasms, of course. To some architects redwood is God's greatest gift to man. To others, plate glass has a place today that Pentelic marble did in the time of the Greeks. Steel in tension holds another architect's world together. I am not given to flexing my structural muscles in public and am content to hobble along on the old post and beam. All of these points of view are healthy, but they should not become standardized and arbitrary—on the college campus or anywhere else.

If members of the boards of college trustees are apprehensive at the mention of using "modern" design at their institutions, it is because they have seen some horrible examples of architecture passing under that label. I am willing to admit that the standards of contemporary architecture in this country are not as high as they might be.

In a country with some 177 million people, there are only

about 22,000 architects. Obviously their efforts cannot even approximate the needs for building and rebuilding in the United States. Also, of the approximately \$60 billion spent each year on construction, less than one-third is for buildings designed by architects. It is a strange paradox that designing and planning are the most important (and the least expensive) part of any project, yet are not considered indispensable.

By and large, universities offering training in architecture fulfill their mission very successfully, arousing enthusiasm and a love of architecture in their students. But since the demand for architects' services is not high, they are beset by the temptation to compromise good design in favor of economic survival. How many college buildings are not what the architect intended but a composite of what boards of trustees, administrators, faculty members, and legislators demanded!

Then, too, the architects themselves are not always capable of good design. They may be too hot in their pursuit of novelty. We unnecessarily complicate our buildings in an effort to do something different, so that the results are too self-conscious, too full of effort to be new and world-shaking. Restraint is important in art as well as in living.

A related fault is the hasty acceptance of the fashionable, so that we have the "glass box" copied everywhere—like a new bonnet the ladies are wearing this season. Obviously the glass building is not suitable to some climates and locations, particularly where there are extreme temperatures. Also, I happen to believe that the glass box fails to fulfill a fundamental need within the heart of man, some inner need for enrichment and embellishment of his surroundings—what I have facetiously called "moxie." I do not mean decoration for its own sake, but the psychological satisfaction that comes, for example, from the pattern of light and shade.

All of these abuses have understandably made some of our colleges leery of embarking upon the "modern" course of campus architecture.

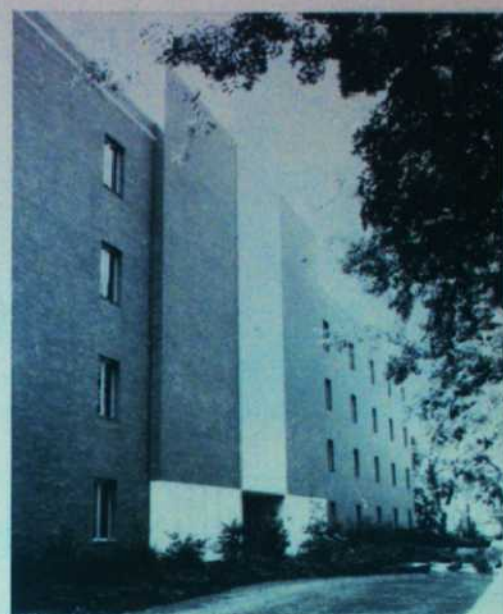
Fortunately, the colleges themselves can help correct these conditions. How? By teaching our cultural heritage, and by themselves serving as examples of what long-range planning can mean in architecture.

One of the functions of education is to teach us the appreciation of and the *uses* of the past. If one knows about the history of architecture, he will also know that modern architecture is adolescent. We have been working on this for only about thirty years. The Greeks produced the Parthenon—which is, after all, a simple building—after 300 years of working with the problem.

With so many rapidly changing conditions of construction—such as air conditioning, new kinds of heating, and the development of the aluminum or glass curtain wall—the architect today has many more chances to go wrong than did the Greek builder. We simply have not yet mastered the fabulous vocabulary with which we have to work. The educated man knows the best of the past, and he knows that he should not be premature in judging the work of the present.

It is part of the obligation of an educational institution to bring to all students this knowledge of the arts and their relationships, no matter what the specialization. When Winston Churchill lectured at M.I.T., he said that he was gratified that such a great scientific and engineering institution found a place for the humanities, giving scientists a background in other things of the spirit which are challenging to every man.

When colleges and universities raise the general level of appreciation of architecture, the results will eventually be seen everywhere. Students become the community leaders who serve on school boards and decide about new buildings; who have ideas



Not only did a new library addition have to be designed, but the old wing had to be converted to an open stack system (free access to the books). The design had to be simple—in short a nice looking warehouse. The result solved function and worked best structurally, and point for point is the most economical building on campus.

for civic improvements in the business districts, in the parks, on the highways. Through general education our people should be taught the importance of beautiful surroundings—which are, after all, a national asset.

In addition, the campuses themselves can serve as good examples of what architectural planning should be. Probably the thing that has caused the most difficulty in the campus of today is that no long-range provisions were made for the campus's development. Because many founders and leaders did not foresee the rapid growth of education, cities have grown up around many institutions and they no longer have elbow room. A crowded, hemmed-in campus is hard-put to be a thing of beauty, even with the best of buildings.

Every educational institution should have a master plan—one that, insofar as it can be, is the vision of able professionals for a future of fifty to one hundred years. Naturally, such a plan will undergo modification as time passes, but at least you are building with some conscientiousness and a final conception in mind. Too many college buildings have been arbitrarily put in the wrong places at the whim of a president or trustee; too many designs and materials have been selected without regard to the appearance of the whole.

Given a plan for the future, every university and college can make a place for the new architecture which will evolve without being prey to every passing fashion. It is never too late to start.