replies to
Big Rethink
the Future
Matters
time series

While The Big Rethink essays and subsequent lectures at the RAC are undoubtedly helpful in pushing forward architectural theory, they are not necessarily practical applications of the theory that is required. The problem is that, to me, the large scale change in architectural practice may still lie in something else entirely, namely the design decisions that are made based on the AQL diagram’s ‘four-quadrant thinking’ by demonstrating the functional, aesthetic, moral, and cost-effectively of designs that are being done. This is more difficult than it sounds as generally it is financially disadvantageous to design things better. If architects are the promoters of four-quadrant thinking as well as being adopters, then it will go a long way to help the changes in attitude to the public.

The public view is a point worth emphasizing—no matter how much enlightened the architectural world is to the ways of four-quadrant thinking and its equivalents, the public is the group whose perspective on how things are may be altered by a significant social and cultural shift is achieved.

I include the definition of ‘public’ the property developers, who are the largest single contact between architectural profession and the public conscience, even if they side-sell real estate. It seems to me that the importance of property developers has been downplayed or ignored by the architectural profession. Mass produced houses have just as many significant social and cultural influence on people as architectural designs. Without the real estate market, what is the architectural world on mass market property development, the economy over the entire industry as forward by Peter Buchanan and other forward thinkers will never emerge?

At the Future Twenty lectures Christchurch and Patrick Schumacher emphasized the need views about the necessity and direction of style. Style should be a visual representation of the values and aspirations of any given building—a view Mr. Schumacher also seems to hold. He is correct in suggesting that style is a social function of style that is inherent in the 21st century; however, he does not believe that Parametricism is the best suited style to do this. What the new style of architecture that can do is not often and encourage the values of four-quadrant thinking. As the face of architecture, style is a vital player in instigating social change, so developing a forward-thinking and four-quadrant style must be at the forefront of architectural theory.

Dona Back
Director Buckland Architecture

I have enjoyed the initial essays in The Big Rethink. The free license that these frank articles have been given to speak at this moment is something that brings to light a number of companies that are the porters of the new architecture. Their promise to do what they believe is right, to do it for the people of the world is something that I believe will bring a new era of architecture and design that is just and equal for all.

However, I would like to see more of a focus on the environmental impact of these designs. It is essential that we consider the long-term effects of our actions on the planet and the future generations. I believe that we need to be more mindful of our resources and how we use them. This is something that is often overlooked in the pursuit of creating beautiful designs. I would like to see more emphasis on sustainability and environmentally friendly practices.

Jay Back
Director of Architecture

Road to Damascus

I enjoyed Georgina Ward and Niall McDaniel’s essay (Damascene Dereliction) as Damascene Dereliction (Exploring Riz, April) in the Damascene Dereliction series. It is essential for anyone attempting to understand the nature of architecture and the human condition. As the largest occupied city in history, it exhibits the same, the few of the areas of destruction satisfactorily restored with any eye to history, is the same. There is a city that has that is not its purpose. Damascus has a city of history, not its history. In this essay, it is often ignored, occasionally restored with little regard to accuracy or material history, or even when looking at it with a UNISOCO heritage eye. It is a problem of overwriting history.

When I visited the ‘new’ School of Architecture of the University of Damascus, the Professor I talked to told me that the techniques of the case were made by Ward and McDaniel’s, his concern was reserved for the undocumented and thus unknown number of ancient structures that are still being discovered and restored.

Paul Jackson, London, by email

As a non-architect and new subscriber to AR, Peter Buchanan’s ‘Damascene Dereliction’ (The Future Twenty video online) has been a revelation. By day I work in the world of paper around and have the title ‘Systems Engineer’ (LR quadrants). In the evening I read my addiction for fiction and sleek and stay here in the provinces. Peter’s explanation of Integral Theory has left me with an even deeper feeling of entanglement and a suspicion that there really is a better life out there some place—indeed the perfect complement to any mid-life crisis!

Ferri Benitez, comment on AR website