

# ARCHITECTURE THAT PUTS MAN IN THE CENTER

The Virus, and then...



di **David Fisher\***

SEGUE DALLA PRIMA

The global disaster that we are facing today will have a devastating impact on tomorrow's world economy and our way of life.

Not only will our lifestyle change, but this cultural shock will bring forth monumental changes that will accelerate the way architecture is conceived today. Architecture will no longer be synonymous with design and beauty, but rather it will be an expression of sustainability and logic, taking a turn for the better.

A news camera zooms in on a beautiful sculpture in the lobby of a hospital in the North of Italy. The roof is like a sculpture shaped as a cloud, but just past this aesthetically angelic forefront there is an understaffed emergency room with an insufficient number of beds and respirators.

Another image appears in the news: the gorgeous Basilica and the majestic St. Peter's Square of the Vatican. Under the columns of the beautiful colonnade, people are lying on the ground with nowhere to go. The homeless who have no food, no care. How will this virus affect them?

I have always believed that architects must first create suitable living conditions for humans, before addressing the question of beauty.

- The priorities of architecture should be:
1. Economically feasible
  2. Human and environment friendly
  3. Functional
  4. Sustainable
  5. Based on sciences - from a sociological, technological to ecological.

**The writer**



• **David Fisher**, 71 years old, was born in Tel Aviv, Israel

• Graduated with laude in Architecture at the **University of Florence**, the city that became his home. He lectured at the Faculty of Engineering.

• He often declared of being stimulated, within his research work about architecture, on one hand by the **medieval towers**, and on the other by the **skyscrapers of New York**.

• The idea of the **"Dynamic Tower"** is his (in the photo together with the bell tower of Giotto) the first example of a building in motion.

Beauty and aesthetics come later. Many architects in the past have become famous by designing beautiful sculptures. I consider this an utter betrayal to their professional responsibility. The mission of architects should be to create spaces for humans to live, to improve peoples' lives, and develop innovative construction methods that may contribute to providing homes for those without one.

Architecture must be, first of all functional. Second, buildings must have a solid and economic financial basis. Third, constructions must be sustainable.

Priorities...priorities...of course beauty is important, but basic human needs come first.

In all my lectures and conferences around the world, I have always explained one core concept: *"Correct is beautiful... beautiful is not always correct"*.

The fallacy is not the fault of individual architects but rather a reflection of our society and perpetuated in professional education. The end goal is to become rich - *"all you have to do is design a strangely shaped building"* (considered contemporary art"), this leads to fame and glory, you might become an *"Archistar"* or *"Starchitect"* and this will make you richer.

One of the most important architectural monuments in history is Brunelleschi's Dome, above the Cathedral of Florence, Italy, a symbol of the Florentine Renaissance and a clear example of "shape resulting from technology". Brunelleschi was to build the largest dome that ever existed. This was the guiding functionality.



**A New Renaissance**

Six hundred years ago was the challenge of Brunelleschi with the Dome of Santa Maria del Fiore, a clear example of how technology dominate the form.



**Functionality before aesthetic**

It is enough with giant sculpture, the "mission" of Architect is to create living space, mainly functional for man and for his activities.

For building the dome, Brunelleschi created new instruments and machines that became a milestone of engineering and of construction technologies.

The result was an output of engineering, of buildability. Indeed, also today, six hundred years later, functionality should shape the form, science to create beauty.

What is the very last "commandment" of architecture? In many of my conferences I found that the audience remained surprised, that I, a Florentine architect, put design and beauty at the bottom of the list...but yes I was lucky enough to experience the works of the renaissance artists, amongst them Leonardo da Vinci, who put science at

the basis of figurative art. The Mayor of Florence, Dario Nardella, stated, the other day, that this disaster could bring about a new Renaissance. I fully agree and trust that this human cataclysm will accelerate our way of thinking, instilling values of attentiveness toward human aspects and the real value of life. I believe that architecture will take on a new meaning.

Leaders of countries will give priority to hospitals, schools, prisons, offices and...affordable homes, architects will serve humans, will be sensitive to social needs, and leave their personal / ego to the bottom of the list. Indeed, in the New Renaissance, after all social needs would be perfectly accomplished, architects,

in their free time, could contribute by bringing beauty to our cities...starting with religious buildings, where esthetics express also certain "spiritual functionality", then to public buildings, to our homes and maybe also to hospitals....

If financial resources are available to embellish a building, it should be done only after

functional needs are met. In a church, for example, figurative art and beauty serve a function, also the nice design of hospitals may have functionality, as it offers relief to patients. The Meyer Hospital in Florence and the Arizona's Phoenix Children Hospital are good examples. But in most other buildings, the esthetics and design are really secondary to the daily functionality.

This attention will be focused on the design of useful, sustainable buildings, which are easy to maintain, with an almost eternal lifespan, not like today's skyscrapers, designed to last only 50 years. Tomorrow's skyscrapers will be like the towers of Tuscany, built in the middle ages and everlasting. We cannot allow ourselves to build giant sculptures and put people inside.

Dynamic architecture and my *Dynamic (rotating) Towers* could only be a symbol and an expression of what is to come, a new concept of architecture that is logical, functional and sustainable - beauty will simply be the aftermath.

A new Renaissance.

\*Architect