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Architectural Education and the Re-Evaluation of Green Architecture

In the face of a climate emergency and with more severe storms ahead we need to question our current way of designing architecture. Question our methods of construction, use of materials, buildings ecological footprints, buildings life cycle and how architecture will respond and resist climate change. The architecture that is being built today because of current educational framework, ignores the urgency to change our thinking of how we build and design new buildings.

The call to action is to stop projects that will further impact our environment! Instead of building new developments we need to reconsider our current living conditions. Like the forest industry with every tree cut down we need to replant and regrow in order to become sustainable. We need to destroy and recycle buildings at the end of their lifecycle to be able to introduce new architecture. Buildings that will produce energy, protect our environment, recycle water and support sustainable communities. Green buildings shouldn't be an option, it shouldn't be an application for credit or certification through programs like LEED or the Living Building Challenge. We shouldn't have to identify specific firms with sustainable practices, like Perkins + Will, but rather we need all architects, all buildings, and all codes to demand strict environmental performance. It's time to identify buildings with poor energy performance and eliminate them from our urban fabric. Like Charles Jenks with Pruitt Igoe we need to mark the end of Contemporary Architecture and focus on an era of Green Architecture.

Architectural Education is stuck in the past! Faculties spend so much time talking about Modernist and Post-Modernists when we need to be talking about Bjarke Ingels Group, Perkins + Will, KPMB, Coolearth Architecture Inc. Diamond Schmitt Architects, Pearce McCluskey Architects. People and firms that are creating Green Architecture, buildings designed for people. We need to be more focused on an architectural education that pushes, our thinking about Sustainable buildings. We need to learn how to use Building Information Modeling, promote wood design and how to maximize mass timber that uses Carbon Sequestration. We need to not only understand Passivehaus, Net Zero, Carbon Neutral and Net Positive architecture but enforce these strategies into architectural practice. We need to deepen our knowledge of digital fabrication and computation to minimize our construction waste. Design briefs need to challenge architectural students to have the lowest energy consumption and recycle buildings, repurpose industrial sites.

Today's education system has students designing buildings in 10-15 years and that means that changing the curriculum now already puts architecture behind the UN's goals for net zero 2030. Schools of architecture may argue like the government that we are thinking about sustainability, students are learning about green solutions and computation but from our perspective learning about what a solar panel is can be very different than how we can begin to calculate what size of panel, how many panels, what orientation, what degree, calculating how much power is generated. We can't keep passing the responsibility onto someone else to make better buildings and save the environment. It is our role and our responsibility to creatively integrate these systems into our architecture and have them work effectively.

It is time for change! Architectural Education needs to change, Architectural Design needs to change, Construction Methods needs to change, Policy and Building Codes needs to change!!