

planners, sociologists, economists, lawyers, and prominent citizens asking for their definition of urban design. Tyrwhitt's essay summarized the responses.

Ten of those replying refused to commit themselves to a definition. Four "noes" were due to busyness—Paul Rudolph was in this category. Three "noes" asserted that defining urban design was impossible. Robert Moses response was short, "I am unable to comply with your request," as was Frank Lloyd Wright's, "I am not interested." But Le Corbusier asserted, albeit quite generally, the form urban design should take: "Urbanism is the most vital expression of a society. The task of urbanism is to organize the use of the land to suit the works of man, which fall into three categories: 1. The unit of agricultural production; 2. The linear industrial city; 3. The radio-concentric city of exchange (ideas, government, commerce). Urbanism is a science with three dimensions. Height is as important to it as the horizontal expanse."²³

Richard Neutra wrote, "Giving shape to a community and moulding its activities is urban design. It deals with the dynamic features in space, but in time as well."²⁴ Walter Gropius wrote, "Good urban design represents that consistent effort to create imaginatively the living spaces of our urban surroundings. In order to supersede today's soul-destroying robotization, the modern urban designer's exciting task is to satisfy all emotional and practical human needs by coordinating the dictates of nature, technique, and economy into beautiful habitat."²⁵ Sigfried Giedion wrote "poetically": "Urban Design has to give visual form to the relationship between You and Me."²⁶ Again one thinks of Sert's words: "a fog of amiable generalities."

Against Precise Definition: Urban Design as Way of Thinking

The problems resulting from the dramatic urbanization pressures of the postwar world—the rapid growth of American suburbs and the lack of housing for many of Europe's displaced—made it urgent for the GSD to train students to grapple with large-scale design problems that required the combined skills of planning and design. We read in the proceedings of the first conference and in the development of the other twelve the struggle to specify the territory for urban design's work. This struggle continues today: Urban design has always had no clear role, territory, and authority.

In the past one hundred years, the design and planning profes-