

promotion of themselves, rather than ideas and ideals bigger than themselves. Even their interest in theory seems strategic and self-serving, consorting with academic theorists and critics who propound and/or interpret theory that gives their work license and legitimacy. The academy has validated and encouraged extremist, self-referential architecture with theory that has been too quick to drop long-standing institutional and cultural values. The media merry-go-round pushes star architects to the edge, while slowly and surely eroding the general credibility and relevance of the profession, especially its more responsible practitioners who have resisted this centrifugal force.

Was there also a change in design methods that corresponded to the shift on these two axes? Or was this shift simply a measure of changing style and sensibilities? Although methodological changes are less heralded than stylistic ones, this chapter argues that there has been an equally dramatic and important change in design methods. One of the most notable methodological changes has been the decline of functionalism and the rise of interest in precedent, context, and typology.

Functionalism

Functionalism, in this context, means a design mode that not only strives rationally to accommodate the programmatic needs and aspirations of a building's users, but also to express and embody those needs and aspirations architecturally. It has been one of the hallmarks of modernity and the most recent step in the philosophical march that started in the late seventeenth century with the Enlightenment and continued into this century as Logical Positivism, which sought to eliminate subjectivity in its quest for the precision and predictability of science. This philosophical tradition has given little credence to anything that cannot be measured. Metaphysics has little if any place in functionalism. "No doubt the Logical Positivists had sought to show that the classical metaphysical problem had either to be dismissed entirely, since no solution to it could be verifiable, or else transposed it into problems in the logic of science."² After this close embrace of metrics, the spiritual and cultural sterility of functionalist buildings is not surprising.

For the functionalist, the design process starts with analysis of the problem at hand. Before attempting any synthesis, the designer must first dissect and analyze the user, the user's program, the building systems and technics, the climate, and the

site. Functionalist architects start with an empty piece of paper—literally, a *carte blanche*—and license to do just about anything formally. They commence with diagrams of uses and their adjacencies. If they are true to the tenets of the Modern Movement, they only look forward, never back to historical examples—free of any preconceptions about how a building might be configured or what it might look like. No books on architectural history would be found on the drafting table, unless it was a monograph of a hallowed architect, perhaps Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre Complet*. The functionalist ideal would have the program and technology design the building by themselves, driven by their own transparent logic. Each building program is addressed as unique, requiring fresh learning and a new start. "Following their functionalist theory, they believe[d] every new design problem to consist of unprecedented requirements of various kinds, including a unique site, a unique set of functional demands, and a unique architectural form which would precisely solve this set of requirements and no others."³

Since functional requirements change quickly in modern society, buildings are often designed to be adaptable over the years and flexible during the daily or weekly cycle. Therefore, functionalists argue that architectural composition should visually express as well as physically accommodate these temporal changes. Thus, buildings should be designed not only to anticipate change, but to read as incomplete or adaptable when first built. Building additions have always occurred incrementally, but the additions, like the host buildings, were usually treated before the Modern Movement as discrete compositions; additions were used to further unify or reinforce an already complete composition or start a new one. Think of the myriad wings of the Louvre or the many additions to the United States Capitol. Buildings tried to be compositionally complete at all times—before and after the intervention. Modernists, however, would sometimes intentionally leave a building's composition open-ended, almost as if construction had been interrupted and was waiting expectantly for the next phase to relieve the tension. The Pompidou Center in Paris is an example of a building that is intended to feel unfinished. Because these open-ended and adaptable buildings or complexes are not fully able to anticipate the future, they often end up being developed in unpredictable ways. The typical hospital complex suffers from such disjointed development. As Stewart Brand says in *How Buildings Learn*, "All buildings are predictions. All predictions are wrong."⁴