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As well as to all graduates, **congratulations to all the parents.**

I suspect that you are all keen to leave in order to celebrate, but tradition invites me to say a few words before you all rush for the exits.

Those who have just received their degrees or diplomas **are**, I presume, looking forward with hope and anticipation to the future.

But what future?

I am not referring to a particular individual's future, but collectively as a society.

Perhaps the only certainty in the future are surprises, some of which will be very surprising surprises. And the only certainty about certainty is its uncertainty.

Today, learning to live with uncertainty, without guarantees, is a fundamental and very real challenge. It is not something which we are trained to deal with.

We can set objectives, we can experiment and we can hope to create better solutions.

But solutions for what future?

Without an idea of a future, political activity would have no defined direction or aim, and the structure of society as we know it would become very different.

But what is, or are the ideas of the Future?

If the idea of progress is still synonymous with the future, then the modern meaning of progress surely requires redefining and a new understanding.

The modernistic notion of progress was based on optimism, yet now, evident all around us are the social and environmental consequences of it.

Allow me to quote an extract from a text by Robert Kennedy, written in 1967 entitled "The American Environment"

"And let us be clear at the outset that we will find neither national purpose nor personal satisfaction in a mere continuation of technical progress, in an endless amassing of worldly goods. We cannot measure national spirit by the Dow-Jones average or national achievement by the gross national product.

For the gross national product includes our pollution and advertising for cigarettes, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and jails for people who break them.

The gross national product includes the destruction of redwoods, and the death of Lake [Erie]. It grows with the production of napalm and missiles and nuclear warheads, and it even includes research on the improved dissemination of bubonic plague. The gross national product swells with equipment for the police to put down riots in our cities; and though it is not diminished by the damage these riots do, still it goes up as slums are rebuilt on their ashes. It includes Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the broadcasting of television programs which glorify violence to sell goods to our children.

As Individuals, we have become more passive and more powerless vis-a-vis the overwhelming presence of society, as that society seeks ever increasing apparent power over nature.

Yet, as we watch competition globalize, the tempo of technological innovation originating from man's desire to master nature can no longer be controlled even by the most advanced societies. It is accelerating through the interplay of worldwide forces with little control or overall purpose.
Every country and everyone is affected. Global is local.

The modernistic notion of progress is no longer satisfactory or appropriate.
Is there a narrow definition of what constitutes progress – that which can be measured?
What happened to man's moral and ethical development as a measure of progress? Do we draw sufficient attention to this in the way we educate?

Kandinsky wrote in Concerning the Spiritual in Art, in 1911
"Our minds, which even now are only just awakening after years of materialism, are infected with the despair of unbelief, of lack of purpose and ideal. The nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game, is not yet past; it holds the awakening soul still in its grip. Only a feeble light glimmers like a tiny star in a vast gulf of darkness."
In our post-industrial society, we have seen workers become consumers relentlessly pursuing worldly goods **and** the continuation of technical progress to sustain it. Excessive consumerism has created, in the very broadest sense, the first consumer generation obliged to begin cleaning up the environment; **but we are also the first** to have been able to measure and recognise the damage, **and the first** generation who must **now 'learn'** how to behave better, and more intelligently towards our biosphere.

A new (human) eco-nomic order is required where there is more eco-logical or holistic eco-nomic exchange as a basis for man's collective well-being and healthy survival. Healthy built environments for (healthy) humans comprise one important aspect of a continuing biosphere.
Competition has been and remains the conceptual trigger of our present economy and society. I do not believe that this is inevitable as is often argued.

Collaboration, cooperation and indeed altruism are as common a natural inheritance as 'survival of the fittest'. This is a clue to redefining economic ethics, where the economy is seen not only to serve people in a material sense but also to place it in a more holistic context where non-material issues are as important as material ones.

It is no longer viable to place **only humanity** at the center of our approach to the future.
At the dawn of this millennium, a new optimism must be based upon working better with people and the environment by **not** attempting to dominate them, but acting **with** them. In this, both architecture and community health have a significant role to play as mediators between a new social culture and commerce; and perhaps you can give some signposts as to how we may make progress in rebalancing our present "**civilised disequilibrium**", where ideology or technology or social organisation are clearly out of sync with each other.

…Vilém Flusser, the Czech-born philosopher, made a humorous and convincing argument in his short essay *The Factory*, that it is through 'the factory', by which he means the place of manufacture, that we can understand the science, politics, art and religion of the society of the time, **and be able to identify the human being in that society**. His sense of humour suggested that homo faber (maker) was perhaps a better description of the common characteristic of human beings rather than *homo sapiens sapiens*.

Today's graduates are part of the new generation that is having to sythesise the new actions of homo sapiens sapiens in **making information** and the old actions of homo faber in making things.

For those of you who have studied subjects in the Built Environment, or Community Health, the issues are essentially the same.

The second half of the 20th century concluded with the fact that we have to fundamentally re-investigate how we act personally and the consequences of our actions upon others and the environment. We have to become more intelligent in the way in which we negate the status quo. By this I mean that our very existence as individuals and as a society dealing with our need to survive, **changes** the balance of nature.

The **early reflections of *ecology upon design*** as a pragmatic search for a clean, green or eco-design methodology has in fact become an investigation into the problem of design in general. The shift from an *industrial reductivist* to a *post-industrial holistic* approach requires a complex inquiry. The new methodologies have to embrace social, political and philosophical criticism of design if we are to redefine design with any intelligent sense of value and meaning. The problem is vast but we are supposed to be *homo sapiens sapiens* and not simply *homo faber*.

By identifying some of the issues that make up the picture of a community within a city, they can be recognised also as those that make up present global concerns. These include **Health, Education**, **Crime, Economics, Demography, Landscape, Heritage, Culture, Leisure, Sport, Sustainability & Ecology**

In Searching for new methodologies, I feel that underlying our difficulties in addressing these concerns is the fact that we still seemed trapped in the way we think about our environments and those who live in them. The list I have just mentioned can be seen to characterise our present way of thinking - which is to separate and simplify in order that we can, or think we can, understand and make our living environments better.

I believe that part of the solution to creating a better earth future is to find ways to reconnect these concerns, and in the process reconnect people to their locality and to themselves. Connexity is a big key – information and people connexity is vital for a healthy urban and ex-urban human infrastructure.

Through investigating the edges, or the gaps between those professional disciplines concerned with realising and maintaining our environment, new and relevant ideas should emerge that will release the intellectual and social energies which have been trapped for so long.

This entrapment has not only alienated people from each other, but sustains the present methodologies and priorities in our society.

Barriers occur only in the mind of man, and like any theory constructed by man these barriers can be deconstructed and replaced. To begin removing the barriers between different disciplines and between professionals, between the elderly and the young, requires a way of thinking and an attitude that is no longer territorial - and is based upon trust and respect. This encourages **confidence with humility** between people.

Professionals should be as capable of realising this as anyone else, and in terms of their present influence on society and the physical environment should have a moral obligation to do so.

Speaking as an architect, I accept that, at the moment, one can only attempt to open up critical discussion of the role of design in a post-industrial eco-logical society in the hope that in doing so, we can help make genuine changes for the better.

One action we could take for each and every design decision, independent of its apparent **scale** of impact, is to **question** its meaning and impact upon the quality of life on a local and global level.

Of course we cannot expect to answer this with any holistic or scientific certainty, but the simple act of asking the question will help us to begin develop a critical sense along with the new analytical tools and methodologies necessary to change the acts and products of design.

Today, mankind needs intellectual force and responsibility that reaches beyond optimism. By that I mean one which frees itself from any kind of post-modern apocalyptic pessimism.

I sense that more and more people today accept that their own lives and society is full of contradictions, and that science does not offer solutions or indeed explain everything.

In western society, there is a sense that the private life of the individual is now far more important than their public responsibility, which is a reversal of general attitudes held only a few decades ago. Individuals seek other individuals with whom they have some empathy. In a wider context, political pluralism appears to express this basic change in society.

We still consider our society democratic, but our political structures have yet to adapt to this fundamental shift in individuality. Indeed, I know of no democracy that has yet embraced men and women as genuine equals.

I know that architects must begin addressing these issues and, in particular, through challenging an urbanism of fear begin to describe spaces which have a meaning in the sense of linking private and public domains, in ways not solely dictated by divisive economic preconceptions and consumerism.
My friend Pippo Lionni elegantly stated the designer's dilemma –
 "In the present society the quantative and qualitative criteria for judging design can be summed up as: does it attract the consumer... Designers have always had more noble standards of appreciating their creations, but in practise the question of functionality, as in doing the job set out for it, of originality of design, of cultural sensitivity or of environmental impact are in this society predicated on the ultimate determining factors - does it in a direct or indirect manner generate financial wealth and or serve to perpetuate the political and economic status quo?"
Exchange through discussion and openness of information is essential for understanding, and when this engages cultural exchange a major prerequisite for creativity is in place. This in turn makes creativity more accessible and maybe more democratic in a less competitive environment.
Real progress for mankind, a real future for the earth and design are becoming really the same.
One could define an optimist as someone who has not got all of the facts.
I hope that my short talk has been able to cast some half-light on distant horizons.
And I end on a quote by Benjamin De Casseres
"Progress is nothing but the victory of laughter over dogma"
Thank you for listening, and good luck.

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