

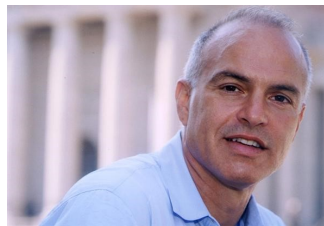
BY MARIAMAWIT
DELEEGNE
& NIKOLAS
GIAMPAOL

CITY X: ARCHITECTURE IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Global conversation by MARK ROBBINS

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The conference room “Sala del consiglio” was filled with energy and curiosity, flowing from the Global Governance students. As we awaited the arrival of our distinguished guest we couldn’t help but let our imagination take over on what to expect; would we enjoy it? Would we gain something from it? Would it be influential as well as educational? We didn’t have to wait any longer because Mark Robbins made his way into the room. As It is custom Professor Piga introduced briefly the event and the guest, and left the floor to the latter. Suddenly the room become dark;



**PRESIDENT & CEO OF
AMERICAN ACADEMY IN
ROME**

A little about Mark:

Robbins was the Executive Director of the International Center of Photography, Director of Design at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington and Senior Advisor on Architecture and Urban Initiatives at Syracuse University, New York.

The guest had asked to switch off the lights, his justification:

"there is no meaning in looking at my face, I want my projects and my explanations to show who I am".

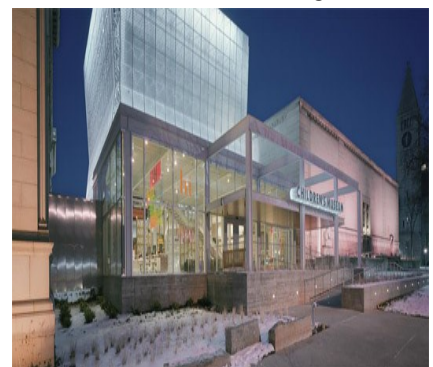
His confidence, self-assurance and bold appearance enhanced our eagerness. Moreover, his Italian spiced with his American accent, which he used to break the ice in his introduction, stole a smile from the audience making the atmosphere even more pleasant.

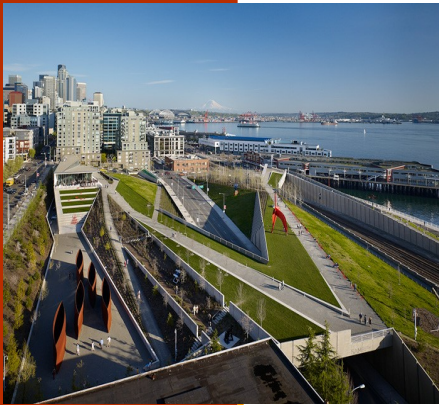
UNUSED = = = = > USABLE

“Few simple lines on the ground can make an empty space into a place of interaction and sharing”. Imagine a space, an unused space and draw basketball lines. What would you think would happen? People would start to make good

use of it. Thus It becomes a public space, transformed from unused to usable. The main task of any architect is resurrecting back to life rejected spaces, from polluted space to parks or museums.

Children's museum in Pittsburgh





Olympic sculpture park, Seattle

Cities change in the way they function by the way they are built.

This can happen by allowing competition between different urban designers or architects as to create a public space that is at the top in its function and serves best the society.

No space is lost, it can always be recycled and with a bit of creativity be transformed into a public space.

St. Francis church, Ecuador *



“ THE
BLUEPRINT OF A
colonised CITY
REFLECTS THE
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NATIVE
SIGNATURE”

THIS IS old THIS IS new

There is a different approach to architecture regarded as a combination of current and past history. It all starts from the idea of telling the history of architecture, especially that of imported architecture to how it has been tempered with local characteristics. Colonialism is one of those waves of importation, the blueprint of a

city and the architecture reflect the colonial influence; walking the trails of these cities, you notice churches in Baroque style, however curved by native workers as to leave their signature by curving them in their own style, as a result establishing their permanent presence* .

How do you reconcile the old and the new in the 21st century? You build in a way that represents who you are. Is about having a clear idea-“this is new, this is old”.

Therefore you respect the past without imitating it.

People & Architecture

Abandoned building in downtown Syracuse



Architecture can be used for a country's economic development. If a place were in state of stagnation, impacting economical and social growth, important factors need to enter the action for counter-stagnation. The latter requires re-envisioning cities, creating a new image and revitalizing.

Locating a potential in a problem is a true gift for any innovator.

ex. you can renovate an abandoned building and turn it into an activity based project by turning them into libraries, restaurants or gyms

...



Mark's renovated building in downtown Syracuse, NY

with private and public funding coming together. Open competition, as mentioned before, stimulates multiple ways of re-thinking a problem and the best approach to tackle it.

Mark's idea of architecture has not just aesthetic purposes but also pragmatic meaning. All the transformations don't happen with a swish of a magical stick, it requires financing,

Reconsidering how you could make spaces, or re-create spaces; competition, helps reach that objective. Nevertheless, architects must grasp the idea of "Fantasy vs. Reality" because they can come up with breathtaking designs but without

"engaging the community from the very beginning of a process, guarantees their approval and cooperation"

Convincing is a fundamental tool, for any initiative, it's about speaking in their language your own song, meaning if you go to a mayor or a politician you don't go ahead and talk about **juxtaposition or biomimicry or fenestration** the latter wouldn't understand unless he has some background in the subject,

instead talk in terms of how a city would benefit from the project because it's economically efficient or because it can be done in a short amount of time and so on. Moreover It is essential to have a conversation with the community, by engaging them from the very beginning of the pro-

cess, and explaining what you are doing as to guaranteeing them their ownership, involvement, acceptance and agreement. in the end what better way to start your work based on trust and cooperation?

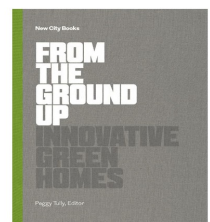
Architecture is well fitted for social purpose.

"It is said that the history of modern architecture can be observed through the evolution of the single-family home. Over generations, each has hoped to improve on the last, rethinking and reinventing this seemingly simple building type. At certain historic moments in the

discourse, new ideas about domesticity have given form to radically different configurations of home and community.

Current emphasis on sustainability presents a unique opportunity to design affordable houses that re-

spond to specific economic, social, and environmental-challenges."



Book by Susan Henderson, Mark Robbins, Michael Sorkin

Sound advice from Mark Robbins

".. the better you know the complex way of how things function,

the better impact you would have in whatever field you engage in,

THEREFORE A BETTER IMPACT ON THE WORLD..." "

"..to understand what you would do on a blank sheet,

you need to sample everything and by doing so discover yourself.

So sample as many things as possible; learn how to speak,

listen, read, learn to criticize and GET THINGS DONE..." "

So yes, it was definitely one of the most intriguing conferences we have had so far, and Mark Robbins was inspirational and possessed by passion for his work. You could learn that every field has his beauty and has its impact on our ever changing world.

In conclusion and from the numerous questions raised by the students, we understand that architecture has to have multitasking scenarios and creates a cooperation between the artists and citizen, who are directly involved in the metamorphoses of the public space.

For more info visit:
globalgovernance.it

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