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Architect

Studied and received his architectural diploma at the Technical University in Darmstadt / Germany. Architectural practice since 1980, specialising in administration buildings, Interior design of banking institutions (trading areas) and detention buildings. Member of the Council of German Architects (BDA), German Werkbund (DWB) and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Full Professor and Chair for Building Sciences, Design and Spatial Organisation at the Brandenburg Technical University (BTU) in Cottbus since 1992. Dean of the school of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Urban Planning at BTU. Vice President of the University (BTU) for Planning and Finances. Responsible for international study- and research programs.

1. In addition to your university career, over the years you have gained a reputation as an expert in 'humane' design. Namely with the design of landmark prisons. What is the essence of delivering a social contribution through architecture of this type?

Making architecture is a social issue at any time. A good architect as a professional is obligated to respond to the human conditions and design the appropriate environment accordingly.

I am deeply convinced, that it is an essential goal of an open and pluralistic society to reintegrate affected individuals back into the community.

I aim to achieve this mission through creating a safe, secure and healthy environment in all my buildings. Recently I took part in an international competition for the Abu Dhabi State Prison at Suwaihan. I would consider it a big challenge for my office to work in this region on a project of this nature.

2. As member of a team from several German universities visiting the UAE, what differences between these nations / faculties do you see in the way architecture is taught?

I believe, through my own recent visit and experience at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), I find no critical differences in design methodology and approach between the BTU and School of Architecture and Design (SA&D) institutions. This is due to the fact that most of the professors from SA&D who I dealt with, come from a similar professional background as our faculty members in Germany. However the differences which do exist, especially in the area of culture, environment and climate, provide excellent challenges for exchange of ideas, research and technology.

3. From this environment around you here, what particular challenges do architects face in this region?

From my own work experience in Europe, due to limited natural resources and climatical conditions related to building technology, we developed a higher level of consciousness to deal with the issues in designing "smart" buildings. This process of thinking and research can be transferred to U.A.E.

I am surprised, however, that the constant solar energy has not been yet effectively integrated in the building industry.

International student exchange programs, as we are about to establish between the AUS and BTU, are the first and -at the same time- decisive steps to work together on the tasks of the future.

4. What is your opinion of the style and sustainability of Dubai's architectural explosion characterised by its penchant for grandiose projects spelling big, bigger and biggest?

Mies van der Rohe's famous statement: "less is more" has not yet reached Dubai. The sensation of simplicity in architecture has to be discovered and big efforts have to be made in regard to the development of a modern city. Serious architecture in an intelligent urban structure is more than creating "arabic" looking facades as a kind of decoration. Windtowers as a "crown" on high rise buildings are "kitsch". Architecture is not a matter of style like a funky fashion show, it is first of all a task of spatial organization serving the needs of a creative typology and enduser.

The cultural heritage has to be transformed into a modern architectural language. I strongly believe, that a qualified education of young architects and engineers from the region at the AUS will serve the needs of the future development of the U.A.E. and beyond.

The SA&D, currently in the transition from the foundation through to the development phase, needs all public and governmental support.

5. If you could obliterate one building on the Dubai skyline, which would it be and why? Which is your favourite. Why?

There are several outstanding "jewels":

Carlos Ott's building for the National Bank of Dubai touches me emotionally as well as intellectually. This complex is an excellent example for the transformation mentioned above. The clarity of the Emirates Towers reminds me of basic Bauhaus ideas. In my opinion these two complexes are brilliant buildings amongst those mostly "decorated sheds" (Robert Venturi).

Last but not least, I am very impressed by the admirable "Royal Mirage Resort". The extraordinary spatial organisation, the memory of historical patterns, combined with a thorough detailing makes this place an architectural treasure.

6. In terms of world class architects, whose work do you most admire?

Prof. Günter Behnisch, my former teacher at university, in my opinion is one of the greatest German architects of the twentieth century. His design for the Olympic Games in Munich 1972 is unrivalled. The "Transparency" is the credo and keyword of all his projects and has never been translated as succinctly as in the buildings for the "Bundestag" (German Parliament) , in Bonn (1987). "Transparency" was used as an architectural statement and message for open minded thinking in a democratic society.

The Dutch architect Gerrit Thomas Rietveld (1888-1964) is my all time favorite and has always influenced my work to a large extent. As a member of the artists and architects group, "de Stijl" - together with the painter Piet Mondriaan and others- he is one of the founders of classic modernism. His "red and blue chair" of 1918 and the world famous "Schröder-house" (1924) in Utrecht / Netherlands are the basic icons of modern thinking in architecture.

One of his impressive statements (1958):

"It is wrong to believe that final solutions have been reached. The possibilities of technique and spatial conditions are endless."

Dear colleagues: Get to work!