



# New Directions in Contemporary Architecture:

Evolutions and Revolutions in Building Design Since 1988

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Eduard François, Housing, Louviers, France, 2006: exterior view.

The unfinished tree trunks that clad the entire building give it a rustic appearance, in line with the aspirations of a growing segment of the population for more ecological forms of dwelling.

to allow a decent view from each table. The pond over which the structure is built was created by recycling the water used in the washing of the fabrics. The circular ramp transforms the passage along the route that unites the spaces of work and the cafeteria into a daily event.



NL Architects, Basket Bar, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2002-3: exterior view.

A raised basketball court frees up space for a bar and public square used as a meeting point.

#### 4.10 The Next Stop

What direction will architecture take in the near future?

It would not be out of line to imagine that the Star System will continue to dominate, reinforced by new commissions, above all from emerging countries: China, India and the Persian Gulf, primarily Dubai, now the centre of significant economic and financial interest. Of these new projects,

PLOT, Maritime Youth House, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1999-2004.

In this project PLOT use inclined planes to connect exterior spaces, enhancing the relationship between the building and the sea. The large glazed surfaces, the slender steel handrails and the use of wood make the building agreeably modern.



many will undoubtedly be of great poetic and formal interest. In fact, it is difficult to imagine that creative figures such as Gehry, Hadid and Koolhaas will continue tirelessly to repeat themselves, accepting the banal and easy success that celebrity can generate.

On the other hand, what we can expect from emerging architects is undoubtedly an ambivalent approach. Some will seek to become part of the Star System, while others will choose to set themselves apart. In the first case this will generate the diffusion of what will, sooner or later, develop into a style, not unlike what took place with the International Style.<sup>58</sup> In the second case, we will be witness to the emergence of new tensions, restlessness and design ideas that are no less interesting than those that, some 20 years ago, provoked the important changes in the world of architecture whose fruits we now enjoy.

There is no doubt that many of these changes are already under way, and it is only as a result of far-sightedness that we critics, who know how best to read the past with respect to what we now observe, are unable to identify and decipher them. This is the same mistake made by those of the previous generation who, back in 1980, ignored the eccentric contributions of such architects as Gehry and Koolhaas to the otherwise Post-Modern Strada Nuovissima presented at the Venice Biennale or, even earlier, in 1978, when they were unable to forecast the novelties announced by the addition to a house in Santa Monica, once again by Gehry.

At present we are witness to the development of three new directions.

The first consists of the growing importance of context, to the detriment of the object. Architecture continues more and more to deal with the territorial dimension and, given that there no longer exist any clear lines of demarcation, nature enters into it with progressively

**58** The International Style, launched in 1932 by the exhibition of the same name held at the MoMA, simultaneously spread and standardised the ideas of the Modern Movement. It was also responsible for the creation of a number of very important and defining works of architecture in the 1950s.



UNStudio, Mercedes-Benz Museum, Stuttgart, Germany, 2001-6: interior view.

The scenographic complexity of the interior spaces is further enhanced by the play of transparent surfaces, created by the application of perforated panels.