



"The works of the past always influence us, whether or not we care to admit it, or to structure an understanding of how that influence occurs. The past is not just that which we know, it is that which we use, in a variety of ways, in the making of new work.... The typology argument today asserts that despite the diversity of our culture there are still roots of this kind which allow us to speak of the idea of a library, a museum, a city hall or a house. The continuity of these ideas of type, such as they are, and the esteemed examples which have established their identity and assured their continued cultural resonance, constitute an established line of inquiry in which new work may be effectively grounded."

The Harvard Architectural Review. Volume 5. Precedent and Invention. Between History and Tradition: Notes Toward a Theory of Precedent. John E. Hancock.

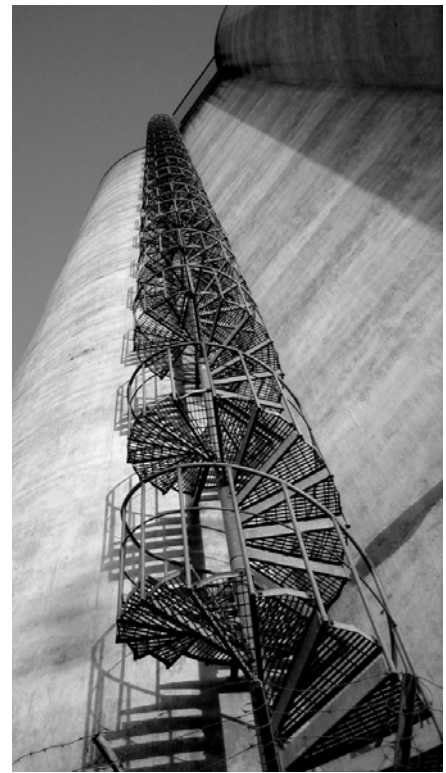


Our present time can be regarded within its many facets, as a revival, or a reinvention, yet typically these two must coincide. It is a common misconception to view life and time as moving in a circular motion, life requires an evolution over time. As such, the more comprehensive view would be that life and time in fact take course in a spiraling motion. So when life seems to come full circle; a neo-classical revival in architecture, the return of the empire waist to women's fashions, the invention of acid-jazz, these are offsets of their former original movements, and have on them the pull of the time of which they

are a product. But our modernism needs change, it needs invention more than just reinvention, it needs *new*.

Never before has any human been faced with the challenge of reinventing the motor vehicle for the preservation of our world, our entire concept of travel for the right to survive. The things of our time which were exempt from the concerns of previous empires are currently the parts of our 'modernism' which are now in need of the most dire re-conception. It is time for the first reshaping of our era. It is time for the first drastic new take on the motor vehicle, the first radical propositions of the high density vertical environment, the essence of public space. The tasks that no other time in history has yet seriously needed to consider in the way our time requires it. Our period lies on the balance of falling into history or surging forward into the inevitable future.

The main factor of this pressure is the environmental issue, springing to the forefront of controversy in our most recent years. The past has had the task to conquer livability, and has done so. They have set for us a standard of modern life, but their concern for livability did not include sustainability. This issue is ours alone to deal with, and it demands powerful and widespread change. Physical change as well as a change in mental disposition. Yet, when the time comes for these changes to be put into action, we must hope that change can be removed from political agenda, and



placed in the hands of those with keen observations. Our environment will be the *need* for the change but must also be seen for the opportunity it provides for more drastic and widespread change in all facets of our life. Change to surpass just the provisions of tomorrow, change that conquers the no so apparent needs. "Built environments have lives of their own: they grow, renew themselves, and endure for millennia."<sup>1</sup> But is our current architecture, so concerned with meeting the needs of *now*, capable of producing anything to endure a millennia, as all our glorious precedents of the past?

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<sup>1</sup> From: The Structure of the Ordinary – N. J. Habraken

The lighthouse was a tool for us to re-conceive the purpose of a thing. This thing was a standard of the past, created out of a need. Today that need has been conquered by our modern technology, and these things now become relics of the past. At the time when they were constructed out of this need, they were not made with the ideal of beauty. And now, once that need has subsided, they may stand or crumble, but are no longer of much concern to anyone. So it leads one to wonder on how we act on the needs of today. Any architect is willing to pound his stamp onto yet another strip mall shows the hideous nature of suburban retail. But the *need* is there, or at least it is now. What shall happen to these creations in a century? Empires past have chosen their immortality in the form of pyramids which cannot be dismantled, aqueducts portraying formidable engineering, cathedrals to make one cower at its presence. Is the strip mall to become the face of 'modernism'? Or residential towers constructed on speed rather than efficiency, which become outdated before the paint is dry. Perhaps the faceless office tower, or a museum by some big player, but will these last the test of time? Will we want them to? Our lighthouse is not extravagant in its design, structure or choice of materials, and it serves the basic purpose of its need as a lighthouse. But the essential point is; if that need were removed the tower could still engage its uninhabited environment, it could stand beyond its principal purpose. By no means could it endure great time and stand as a monument to the past, but it portrays that fundamental concept and stands only as a microcosm to the possibility.



The call for the lighthouse was, in a word, up. In our design we had to take serious considerations to the meaning of up, the feeling and experience of up. Currently our city fabrics have relied heavily on a vertical environment, but the experience of verticality is lost within the elevator. This is man's invention to escape the limitations of our life, generally pinned within the horizontal coordinates of North-South, East-West. Where a bird can choose to move up, and a fish

down, human life generally takes place within a shallow 2D plane. But as our world grows more populated, urban areas become denser, and the obvious answer is up. But adding this entirely new element to human interaction is done in the most basic way to serve only the immediate needs. The standard elevator core and escape stair is only functional and gives no thought to experience. One may be forced to think of a mountain as natural verticality and picture how the human attempts to conquer that vertical environment. He will carve a path, not vertically but snaking around the mountain cutting into it in three dimensions. Following the trail a donkey or elephant would search out while looking for his own route. Moving up such roads or trails, towards a summit, gives one an all-encompassing experience of the vertical motion. This is what we tried to accomplish with our lighthouse, with the exterior, spiraling stair. Experience of the vertical motion in three dimensions, experience of the site from all angles, and blatant placement of that experience where it becomes most attainable to the passer-by. This verticality is experienced through the stair but demonstrated by the vertical shaft, which this stair wraps its self around. This shaft displays the essence of the tower, the light, the motion and the height.

The beauty of the lighthouse was its site, its elevated connection to nature. Our lighthouse was designed as a structure engaging to the public, a look out based on its location above magnificent and dangerous terrain. We placed it on the site of an outdated, yet functional, lighthouse in Hawaii. It is perched high a top a cliff with a commanding view, and in varying forms this is typical to all lighthouses, they become a type. The lighthouse, starting as fire signal, became a safe beacon, calling its people home, providing safe landing, a signal of hope, security, and firm land. The lighthouse was home to a light-keeper, and his family, which adds yet another ideology. The Boston light<sup>2</sup>, on Little Brewster Island, is to this day one of the very last manned lighthouses, continuity of an ideal and the portrait of an ideal that has run its course. The North American shipbuilding boom, in the early 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> StiffCrust



century, inadvertently created a boom in the production of lighthouses<sup>3</sup>, which began erecting themselves all along our coasts around 1829. In a similar way to how our modern commerce continues to boom in our era demanding more commercial space to be hastily produced. But the need of today is always of more concern than the possibilities of the future.

Lebbeus Woods said “Some essential realities are being masked by what has been referred to as the ‘self-satisfaction’ of mass culture.”<sup>4</sup> Our secular society has a very destructive nature, accumulation over creation. No other time period could understand what it means to live in the i-pod nation. The task of capitalizing on the masses today is as simple as the task each person has, every morning, deciding on which pair of shoes to wear today. North American youth, whether in understanding or not, every day makes choices on which billboard to become; what the t-shirt says, which logo on the hat. All the mindless advertising to no positive end. What we actually need to capitalize on is not the self-satisfaction but in the boundless opportunities which exist within the people and their willingness to support and promote. Change can only come from the people, so it must be the people who begin to promote and inflict that change; it just needs to be made to catch on, like a virus, like a fad.

N.J. Habraken, in his book “the Structure of the Ordinary”, states, “The living environment can persist only through change and adaptation.”<sup>5</sup> Our creations possess the identity of a place, any city skyline is a portrait of that city, that portrait is formed by our hand. It is so clear that our urban context is a living organism and we daily inflict the change that gives it life. Entire industries are devoted to that change, industries of which we are a part, but the pursuits and concerns of those industries rightly belong to the whole. Each member of a population should possess the observations and the will to contribute to the future of the urban condition, which we shall then create. This can only be accomplished when everyone chooses to look at development for its possibilities and view a project not as the single answer to a single need but the possibility to answer many needs and provide for the needs that may not be so apparent at the outset of the project.

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<sup>3</sup> StiffCrust

<sup>4</sup> Lebbeus Woods from Radical Reconstruction

<sup>5</sup> From: The Structure of the Ordinary – N. J. Habraken

“The key to this way of perceiving the environment is control: the ability to transform some part of that environment. To the extent that we are players – inhabiting office cubicles, fixing up homes, investing in real estate – we exercise control. Control may result in closing a communicating door between two rooms, or in demolishing a neighborhood. Exerting formal control means transforming, and conversely all transformation denotes control. Wherever physical parts are introduced, displaced, or removed from a site, some controlling agent – a person, group of persons, organization or institution – is revealed.”<sup>6</sup>

Our future will force us to reveal ourselves through our affect on this fragile environment. We have been given the tools required to make the differences, the question will remain how we choose to employ them to execute our control.

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<sup>6</sup> From: The Structure of the Ordinary – N. J. Habraken



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