

I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to my English colleagues for their consideration in awarding me this medal established in honor of Sir John Soane. I am well aware of what Soane signifies for architects and for English architecture as a whole.

Soane seemed destined to be an architect from birth, and fatefully his tutelage began under George Dance the younger. It would be difficult for him to have found a better master and guide. Dance, who had spent 6 years in Rome and had acquired from his father a solid professional training, quickly recognized Soane's talent and encouraged him to enter the Academy and later to move to Rome. Soane's time in Rome marks a definitive influence on his career and his life. From the very first moment, he was aware that the Classical canon was no longer the only architectural language and that our architectural heritage allowed liberty in the manipulation of form. His long and fruitful career marks the end of a brilliant era in English architecture that - after the late Baroque of Hawksmoor and Vanbrugh - had its roots in the Palladian style of the early 18th century and which included such notable architects as John Woods, the Nashes, the Adams and the Dances. But Soane, who had shown his profound love and respect for Rome in the design of his own home, and his passionate collecting of Classical antiquities, was conscious, perhaps with a certain melancholy, that he would represent the end of the deeply nostalgic English architecture that had since the times of Inigo Jones taken the Eternal City as its inspiration. (*Fig. 1, Soane/Gandy*)

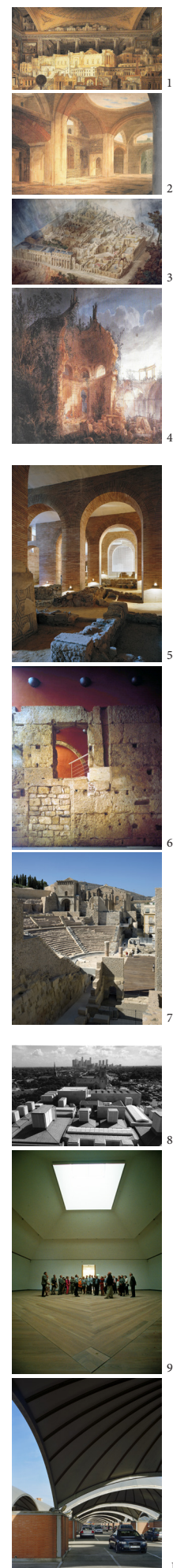
Soane knew himself to be an architect and spent all of his life emphatically proving so. He did not pretend to be an artist, but an Architect, as worthy of respect as that accorded to artists by society. Soane belongs to a generation of architects who assume full responsibility for the execution of their vision. The architect who designs the building and also who determines its significance. The building, formerly understood as an artifact, a part of life and nature, as it was conceived from the architects of the Renaissance to the Baroque, now embodies the result of an assemblage of elements thoughtfully composed by the architect. This profile, introduced by Soane, is a premonition, whether we like it or not, of the architect of today.

Soane was certain that his work as an architect would be of interest to future historians. We see this in the care he took of his drawings, that has permitted critics and historians to follow carefully the path of his career. And proof of the esteem he held for his work is also apparent in his collaboration with the architect and renowned draftsman Joseph Michael Gandy. Gandy's remarkable renderings of Soane's work are today just as impressive whether they depict perfectly realized designs or as visions of them as ruins. Gandy's illustrations of the Bank of England are a perfect example. Soane was aware how the essence of architecture was manifest equally in its process of construction as it was in the vision of its ruin. Soane saw his work inscribed in time. The extraordinary panorama of all his work makes manifest how Soane foresaw his work becoming history. (Fig. 2-4. *Soane/Gandy*)

For Soane, I feel both proximity and a profound sympathy for different reasons. Like him, I also had the good fortune to begin in architecture under the guidance of two architects I consider my masters, Saénz de Oíza and Jorn Utzon. Like Soane, I spent two years in Rome at the Academy, later a constant influence in my professional life. In fact, on three occasions - in Mérida, Tarragona and Cartagena - I have had the luck of finding myself very literally in the midst of Roman architecture. (Fig. 5-7. *Moneo in Mérida, Tarragona, Cartagena*)

And without reaching the extremes shown by Soane, I can say that I have devoted my life to architecture. In my work, Soane has figured strongly on several occasions. First, for the skylights in the Thyssen Bornemisza Museum in Madrid, then later in the museums at Stockholm and Houston, Soane's Dulwich Gallery was a clear inspiration. The vaults of the Atocha Station and the light wells at the Don Benito library also recall motifs frequently found in Soane's work - recognizing implicitly that in architecture there is no need to fear precedents. (Fig. 8-10. *Moneo in Houston, Stockholm, Atocha*)

With that brief tribute to Soane, I would like to move on to a question particularly pertinent to today's architecture. The awareness of the intimate connection between time and architecture that we find so strongly present in the figure and work of Soane shows us how knowledge in architecture has moved from the treaties of the past to the histories we now rely upon. The critics and historians writing these narratives have always made use of the Modern Movement as a fundamental point of reference in their accounts. Today, this reference to the Modern Mo-



vement is no longer pertinent and I would like to take the opportunity provided by this lecture to consider a new historical paradigm that could describe the principles and criteria prevalent today.

During Soane's lifetime, Napoleon had shown that it was possible to inscribe oneself in the destiny of nations. His contemporary, Hegel, who witnessed his campaigns explained history in similar terms.

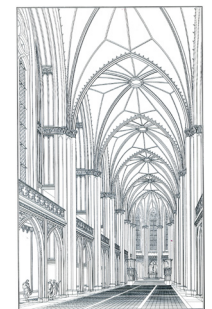
This sudden consciousness of History, which occurred at the beginning of the 19th century, would be present in many aspects of daily life and would soon manifest itself in architecture as well. As a result, we see History come to the fore in architecture, as architects made liberal use of historic styles. History provided architecture with useful ingredients, endowing it with a disciplinary status similar to that of physics, chemistry or the natural sciences that took it beyond the strictly artistic order to which it had been confined. The work of an architect such as Karl Friedrich Schinkel, reveals an architecture founded on historic styles according to each occasion. For Schinkel, historical references permitted him to associate program and style, with an understanding that style was simply the architectural material at his disposition. The Doric was used for the most respected institutions, the Gothic for a church, or the vernacular for a Prince's summer palace. (Fig. 11-13. *Schinkel*) But perhaps in a city like London, it isn't necessary to cite examples other than the ones you have here, such as the Houses of Parliament. (Fig. 14. *Parliament*)

This interest for historical precedents in architecture is sustained throughout the 19th century. Architects are converted into historians and travel in search of documentation of obscure buildings that often reappear in contemporary works. Simply considering architects who traveled to Spain in this period, we should cite the work of Street with the Spanish Gothic and recall Richardson's voyage to Zamora, Toro and Salamanca which became patently manifest in his celebrated Trinity Church in Boston. (Fig. 15-17. *Street, Salamanca, Trinity Church*)

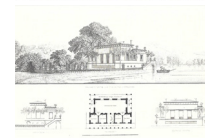
This willingness to use history as a quarry of architectural material establishes an architecture capable of reflecting the spirit of the new emerging nations that arise during the course of the 19th century. It is through history and its use that we can understand the creation of so many



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national styles, a phenomenon that continues well into the 20th century in buildings as important as the Stockholm town hall, to offer just one example. (*Fig. 18. Stockholm town hall*) And we shouldn't be surprised if the engineers and the architects assigned to integrate the new materials and technology in construction tend to adopt the Gothic forms so much celebrated by Viollet-le-Duc, seen as the epitome of rational construction.



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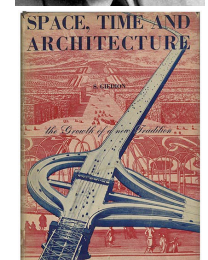
But if this recognition of the importance of history was the underlying theme of architecture in the 19th century, as seen in Banister Fletcher's history, we should also recognize that the Hegelian perspective also provided an interpretation of history that brought people to see the arts as subject to a process of continuous evolution, from the strict representation - in all its significance in terms of content, technique and process - to greater abstraction where formal issues prevailed. A vision of history in teleological terms that seeks to understand how forms have unfolded in time, endowing with meaning the process of continuous progress, a key concept to explain mankind's development.

It will be Heinrich Wölfflin who defines this new way of seeing the history of art in his seminal text, "Principles of Art History." Wölfflin's ambition was to write a history of art without names, in which the Renaissance and Baroque evolved as a process of formal evolution through their immanent development, independent of specific artists or works. Wölfflin sees the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque as a progressive conquest of the linear to the picturesque; from surface to depth; from the closed to the open form; from unity to plurality; and from the direct and explicit to the diffuse and complex. The concept of immanent formal evolution leads from the figural to the abstract in art and architecture in a way that suggests the liberation from material and constructive limitations, and suggests a new dimension to conquer, space itself.

If to this Wölfflinian thesis, we add the idea of the *Zeitgeist* - which affirms the intimate relation between the plastic arts and society and their capacity to express the desires of that society at a given point in time - then we will have understood the significance of a text like Sigfried Giedion's "Space, Time, and Architecture", a canonical text that signals the end of treaties and manuals, replaced by architectural histories. (*Fig. 19,20. Giedion, bookcover*) Treaties and manuals abandoned for good reason - due to the growing importance of specialized disciplines, on the one hand, and the decline of the idea of the building as a coherent who-



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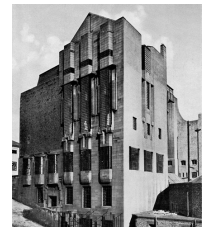


le, on the other - and histories take their place. Giedion, who had studied with Wölfflin, sought to place the architecture of the Modern Movement within the current of history. For Giedion, perspectival space, determined from a single, specific point of view, was no longer a valid means of representation during those years between the wars. He recognized that it was the multiplicity of points of view that best portrayed the instability discovered by the concept of relativity introduced by new physics. Giedion describes these new circumstances well, and by doing so helps architects to understand the significance of these new forms.

Although at the end of the 19th century, one could detect a certain resistance to the academic tradition, present in both the Art Nouveau (*Fig. 21. Mackintosh Glasgow*) and in the call to abandon ornament and the appeal of elemental volumes, evident in the work of an architect like Adolf Loos (*Fig. 22. Villa Müller, Loos*), it wasn't until after the first World War that a new order was established. In the late '20's a new architecture appeared that sought to reflect the spirit of the time so clearly present in ocean liners, trains, automobiles, and fashion. The urgency to give form to built work coherent with the *Zeitgeist* appeared simultaneously in different countries as expressed in manifestos. Naturally, these changes did not come easily. A clear example appears in a city like Hamburg, with the reconstruction of the city center and a building like the Chilehaus where the architect Höger celebrates its strong expressionist character. (*Fig. 23. Chilehaus Höger*) Just a few years later, in 1927, the Weissenhof of Stuttgart appeared as a tour de force of the new architecture announcing the birth of the Modern Movement. (*Fig. 24. Weissenhof*)

History and manifestos, then, instead of treatises. Action, construction...instead of the elaborate doctrine or theory that comes from the analysis of built precedents. But it would be Giedion, associated in the CIAM with Le Corbusier - ever eager to attract followers - who would convert the narrative of the new architecture into doctrine. (*Fig. 25. retraction to CIAM*) Giedion aspired to establish the Modern Movement as a fully consecrated style, and to link it with those that had served Wölfflin in his account of formal abstraction. The Modern Movement could become a historical category through which the new architecture could be explained.

But Giedion was not the first to make this attempt. Given its impact at the time, we should mention Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock's "The International Style" which served as a welcome to the new architecture of the Modern Movement. After citing the precursors -



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Behrens, Perret, van de Velde, Wright - the catalogue defines the formal principles of the new style, which they claim as one more in the series of historic movements - the Gothic, the Renaissance, the Baroque, the Romantic - since it reflects a given moment in the course of history. In addition, W.C. Behrendt's "Modern Architecture", published just before the second World War, establishes many of the same general principles and clearly defines the formal qualities of the new architecture.

But it is "Space, Time and Architecture" that should be considered the first of these narratives that presents itself as an alternative to the treatises, making the Modern Movement the inevitable reference in charting the evolution of architecture. And it is clear that this interest in history has become manifest in many different formats, ranging from monographs on architects to critical essays relating architecture with other disciplines.

We should speak of Bruno Zevi, author of the first book that intentionally labels itself a 'history', which in 1950, still Wölfflinian, declares that the history of architecture is the history of the conquest of space, and consecrates Frank Lloyd Wright as the hero who masters this challenge. And there is also the valuable contribution of Reyner Banham, who, instead of following his teacher Nikolaus Pevsner's impulse in emphasizing the work of the artists, redirected his attention in "Theory and Design in the First Machine Age" to things that were secondary in other histories, like those dedicated to new construction techniques. Or a historian such as Manfredo Tafuri who writes his "Contemporary Architecture" - in collaboration with Francesco Dal Co - from a Marxist perspective, emphasizing aspects such as urbanism and technology. But always, even with Tafuri, the Modern Movement appears as an obligatory reference.

The other histories such as those of Leonardo Benevolo, Vincent Scully, Jürgen Joedicke, Charles Jencks, William Curtis or, more recently, Kenneth Frampton, can also be understood as texts that situate the present with coordinates established by the Modern Movement, interpreting it as a turning point, similar to the way the Renaissance architects left behind the Middle Ages. And if we admit that our initiation to the discipline of architecture, our textbooks, have been the histories, we should recognize - since all of them take the form of a story - that the Modern Movement has been the basis of this established canon.

We can see how a critic as insightful and intelligent as Alan Colquhoun describes in the Oxford History of Modern Architecture of 2002 this situation, *“Many aspects of Modernist theory still seem valid today. But much in it belongs to the realm of myth and it is impossible to accept at face value. One of the main ideas motivating the protagonists of the Modern Movement was the Hegelian notion that the study of history made it possible to predict the future course. But it is scarcely possible any longer to believe –as the modern architects appear to have believed– that the architect is a kind of seer with the power of discerning the spirit of the age and its symbolic forms. Such a belief was predicated on the possibility of projecting the conditions of the past onto the present”*.

And here we have arrived to my point. I ought to say now that in spite of having situated ourselves through histories that take the Modern Movement as their cornerstone, today’s architecture can hardly be explained with this reference. I believe today we have moved so far away from the Modern Movement that we ought to establish a new paradigm. In other words, I believe we no longer need the Modern Movement to explain and interpret architecture today, because, as Colquhoun says, the Modern Movement is only a myth and *“the myth itself has now become history and demands critical interpretation”*. And while some bold architects maintain the inertia of the heroic role assumed in the past, it is difficult to believe that they have the power of discerning the spirit of the age and its symbolic forms. In other words, the faith Modern architects had in a shared doctrine is no longer possible.

Should we use one of those new “cities” of the Gulf or the Far East to describe what architecture is today? (Fig. 26,27. *Doha, Singapur*) Or do the new neighborhoods of the old European cities offer all these features that characterize today’s architecture? Do these new cities reflect our *Zeitgeist*? We recognize that we live in a new age, that the XXI century’s digitalization represents a transcendental change, like mechanization was for the XIXth and XXth, but it is difficult to clearly define the formal character of this new culture. Contemporary architectural expression, in spite of its global presence, isn’t unified and inclusive in the way it was with the first generation of modern architects, trying to give form to the “First Machine Age”.

It would be absolutely impossible today to make a list of architects that share common ground in the way the architects of the Weissenhof or the International Style exhibit had. Neither common formal features



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nor common ethical or aesthetical criteria allow us to imagine a collective of architects working with a shared language. It's unnecessary to cite names because the differences among them are so salient, that to speak of a common languages makes no sense. In fact, I would say that architects try to emphasize these differences in order to make apparent their own individual trademark.

Today's architecture reveals a diversity which eludes a common language or a single characteristic material such as the white stucco was for the Modern Movement. A not so distant effort to preserve this common language appeared with the New York Five architects who, as we know, failed in their experiment. (Fig. 28-29. NY5) Only an architect like Alvaro Siza continues to work with a well established language that, in his case, is clearly his own personal version of Modernism. (Fig. 30,31. Siza) Other architects, such as Herzog & De Meuron, emphasize this diversity, making the choice of the material a key issue for understanding each specific building. (Fig. 32. HdM, Schaulager) The variety and contrast of materials that characterize their work is a clear token of their linguistic eclecticism.

That today's architecture is far removed from the Modern Movement is also manifest when considering the actual relationship between form and function. One of the most valued principles of the Modern Movement, "functionalism", has been replaced by the generic concept of flexibility. From a strict determinism when defining the form of a building, we have moved to coin the term "indifference of form". (Fig. 33,34. OMA, HdM) Or better, form can no longer be directly related with function. Rossi's statement about "functional indifference" reinforces such an approach. (Fig. 35. Rossi Berlin) Today, it is accepted that buildings are indifferent to their uses and that they can accommodate diverse programs over their lifetime, in contrast to the principles of the Modern Movement.

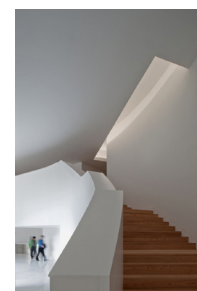
Rationalism's influence on architecture is today ignored and rational construction, in terms of "intrinsic economy", is today neglected. (Fig. 36. Balmond/OMA) An attribute always present in vernacular and anonymous architecture is now lost. Instead anything that can be built is deemed rational. And excessive costs – the price for capricious forms – seem to be a trifling expense to be paid once that the owner, or better said the market, justifies the interest in the built form. Quite a different approach from the most radical followers of Modernism such as Hannes Meyer, Mart Stam or Hans Wittwer. (Fig. 37. Wittwer, Leipzig)



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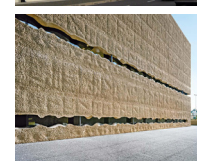
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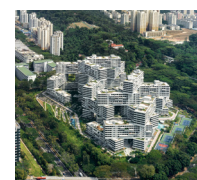
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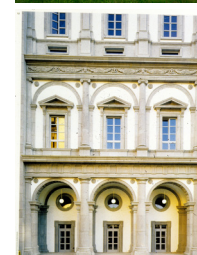
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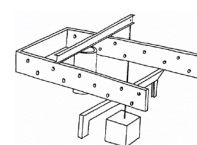
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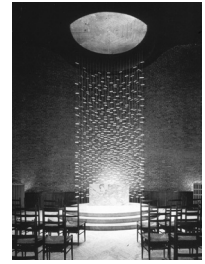
For most historians, the essence and significance of all architectural experience is the spatial sequence. This was recognized by the second generation of Modern Movement architects, such as Paul Rudolph or Eero Saarinen. (Fig. 38,39. *Saarinen MIT, Rudolph Yale*). Something no longer present today when architecture is seen more as the result of assembling elements. Space in architecture is more often today the accidental result of the design process. (Fig. 40. *Gehry Bilbao*) It is very often a residual, interstitial space but no longer generates the building as a whole.

Among the established objectives of the Modern Movement it can be said that the attempt to build with the most current technology is the one which remains strongest today - even though very often it could be considered an alibi. Following Reyner Banham's advice, Archigram's members were those who gave technology a primacy that threatened to reduce the Vitruvian triumvirate of *firmitas*, *utilitas* and *venustas* to *firmitas* alone. (Fig. 41. *Archigram*) Archigram's influence was manifest in Piano and Rogers' Beaubourg and marked the arrival of a new trend (Fig. 42. *Pompidou*). Since then many architects have followed in their pursuit of a technological image that fulfills all the symbolic and iconic value of their buildings. For architects such as Foster, Piano or even Nouvel, (Fig. 43,44. *Foster HK, Piano Botin*) the use of technology often serves to legitimize the architectural form. Some other architects, such as Sanaa, use technology in quite a different manner, giving priority to the pure form so making the rigorous use of techniques almost invisible. But neither one approach nor the other seems to follow the attempts of the orthodox masters of the Modern Movement, such as Mies (Fig. 45-48. *Lens, LeC, Terragni, Mies*) for example, who strives to give form to the most elementary steel construction processes or Le Corbusier or Terragni when they give expression to the new concrete construction techniques.

And yet indeed there are new techniques which lead to today's popular notion of "Bigness". Ultimately "Bigness" has become a category unto itself that even offers claims for its own theoretical legitimation. Rem Koolhaas has written enticing pages about the way he understands "Bigness". I ought to say that I am captivated by them and I will offer you some lines as proof. *"Of all possible categories, Bigness does not seem to deserve a manifesto; discredited as an intellectual problem it is apparently on its way to extinction -like the dinosaurs- through clumsiness, slowness, inflexibility, difficulty. But in fact only Bigness instigates the regime*



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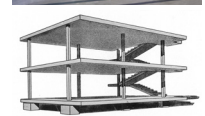
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*of complexity that mobilizes the full intelligence of architecture and its related fields... Bigness no longer needs the city; it preempts the city; or better still, it is the city; if urbanism generates potential and architecture exploits it, Bigness enlists the generosity of urbanism against the meanness of architecture”.*

It is true that architectural history is filled with big buildings but many questions come immediately. Are big buildings mandatorily needed today? Who seeks big buildings? There are moments in which they may be necessary or even useful but I would argue that they are mostly a symptom of our late capitalism. Obviously the economy – and the real world – have always exercised their influence over buildings and their construction but today it seems to be driven more by management decisions than by actual needs. And Bigness brings almost as a corollary the notion of icon. At the XL scale, designs manifest a clear formal strategy, establishing above all what sort of an icon the building will be. (Fig. 49-50. Rotterdam, Hamburg) The phantom of arbitrariness appears once the iconic value overrides all the other aspects of a building's character.

This large scale has also had a tremendous impact on the design of housing, something the Modern Movement always engaged as a fundamental issue. Predicated on social commitment, the exploration and design of new typologies had a profound impact on housing throughout the fifties and sixties. Today, social housing is perhaps the most neglected architectural field, abandoned to market forces without any concern to develop new approaches. The utopian goals that still were alive in the recent past are now definitively gone. The most thoughtful recent answers to housing can be found in Asian architecture where towers are designed and built to address the problem of the scarcity of land. The directness and even, in some moments, the brutality with which housing is treated, forces me to insist that this issue, developed rigorously during the Modern Movement, has been all but abandoned.

New means of representation and new ways of controlling the development of the architectural form arrived with our digital era. Computers have brought a new way of anticipating what buildings can be, transforming both how they are designed and represented. Digitalization brings with it the notion that form can be established through parametric procedures, allowing us to fulfill the old fantasy that form can be determi-



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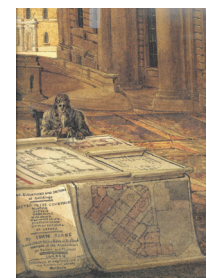


ned by simply applying known parameters. Obviously those who defend such an approach ought to admit that “fashion” –or some sense of the *Zeitgeist*’s pressure– appears in the hand of the designer. Without doubt, the lure of novelty motivates trends in fashion and inspires the continuous desire for change in architecture. And, indeed, it is difficult to believe that the seductive pleasure of invention will be entirely the domain of artificial intelligence. (Fig. 51. Zaha Hadid Seoul)



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Having touched briefly on some of the issues characterizing today’s architecture, and having accepted that today’s architects have been taught from histories, rather than manuals and treatises, I ought to insist that our contemporary architectural world cannot be understood as the coherent evolution of the Modern Movement. And furthermore that we cannot rely anymore on the principles that inspired it. It is a situation not very different than that of Sir John Soane when, at the end of his life, from his house in Lincoln’s Inn, he could see that the architectural canon and the language of Classicism were no longer valid and that the new world of architecture was something he wouldn’t recognize. (Fig. 52. Gandy).



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If we no longer have a clear idea of the attributes that ought to belong to a building – something that indeed the architects possessed from the Renaissance to the Beaux Arts and even in the times of the Modern Movement – and instead can only understand buildings in a temporal sequence, then we should ask critics and historians to decipher the significance of today’s architecture.

I wonder whether the art critics and historians are best suited to describe this new paradigm or whether it isn’t the sociologists and cultural thinkers who will offer a more accurate diagnosis. It is essential to know something more about our present culture in order to understand the needs and desires of our fluid, mercurial society. One of the greatest contrasts between our times and the period between the wars is that they had a sense that progress could be anticipated, and that the *Zeitgeist* could be made manifest. Architects in the ‘20’s and ‘30’s were able to think utopically about the city because they felt themselves capable of giving shape to the spirit of the times. That is something that we don’t dare to do today, when only the most radical pragmatism seems to prevail. I don’t believe that we are now able to foresee how things will de-

velop. We accept, as the Spanish philosopher José Luis Pardo says, that *“... the unknown future is more real than the present and the past. It is the future which decides the sense and the durability of both, past and present, but it is also a fiction that has yet to happen and that may never happen at all”*.

I would like to know a bit more about this ineluctable, immediate future that seems destined to appear without our intervention, without room to believe – as the architects of the Modern Movement thought – that we are contributing to the development of the “Idea” that Hegel thought sustained history. For this reason, I eagerly await an explanation of today’s architectural world without a reference to the past, given that it seems so little related with our present. I think this is the great challenge to those who seek to account for today’s architecture. I wonder whether we should consider architecture only as the work of individuals and the cities as the outcome of an almost uncontrollable process. Or if there is still a possibility to save the legacy of our cities and take them as frames and references able to keep their integrity when they allow our eagerness for novelty to develop, as it is implicit in human life and highly stimulated by the advance of science. I very much would like it to be possible and I would like to see architecture, the discipline to which Sir John Soane dedicated himself in body and soul, serving as the instrument to make this very much needed mediation between the future and the past. Surely architects will welcome critics willing to become historians in order to explain how the formal world has come to be what it is today. This is a formidable challenge for those who would take it - but one that is necessary. And with this thought I conclude this celebration of the great architect Sir John Soane.