# *A New Vanguard* by Franco Purini

## Main argument

- What most people call "modern" or "global" architecture is not truly innovative.

- Real innovation means going back to the core principles of architecture.

## Problems with today's global architecture

- It's all about function and technology, not meaning.

- Cities and buildings feel disconnected, like random pieces in a puzzle.

- Everything looks flashy but lacks depth, architecture as Instagram content.

- There's no respect for place, history, or identity.

- Buildings compete for attention instead of working together.

- Beauty has been reduced to surface-level appearance.

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## The "first principles" we've forgotten

| Principle | What it means |
| --- | --- |
| Unity | Architecture must connect land, city, and environment. |
| Tectonics | Buildings should show their structure clearly. |
| Place | Good design creates meaningful spaces rooted in history. |
| Necessity | Every design element must have a purpose (no fluff). |
| Representation | Buildings should express the purpose of what happens inside. |

## What should architecture aim for instead?

- Be practical, but also poetic and full of meaning.

- Stay local and cultural, not just trendy or international.

- Use digital tools, but don't let them control creativity.

- Create buildings that are beautiful, timeless, and human.

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## The new vanguard = a new attitude

- Not nostalgia, but a smarter future.

- Be experimental, but meaningful.

- Architecture should feel like a gift, not a product.

## What does Purini mean by a "new vanguard"?

- He argues that: What is currently seen as avant-garde (global architecture: flashy, tech-heavy, media-savvy buildings) is not truly innovative. It's repetitive, self-referential, disconnected from human needs, cities, and culture.

- Purini calls for a new kind of avant-garde: a new vanguard.

| Current "avant-garde" | Purini's "new vanguard" |
|---|---|
| Driven by style & spectacle | Rooted in meaning & necessity |
| Tech-first, often soulless | Human-first, deeply contextual |
| Breaks with tradition blindly | Reconnects with timeless values |
| Prioritizes form/image | Prioritizes function + spirit |
| Works in isolation | Builds dialogue with place & past |

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## Details I picked out of the text related to my subject: AI

**Purini:**

He's pointing out that the city is too complex to grasp in one unified way, and because of that, simplistic, fast-paced solutions (like today's "global architecture") fail to truly connect with what the city is.

**Me:**

Just as Purini argues that the city can't be understood in one dimension, I believe we're rushing into AI and tech-driven habits without grasping their complexity. We risk losing the poetic, slow, and thoughtful aspects of design and daily life.

The first consideration that accompanies my discourse is the impossibility of understanding the city in its thematic extension. There are in fact many areas of knowledge that intersect with it. I will list some of them, apologizing in advance for any unintended omission. Philosophy, religion, climatology, sociology, economics, anthropology, botany, medicine, physics, statistics, politics, environmental engineering, geology, astronomy, geography, legislation are some of the areas of knowledge about the city. To these we must add others such as history, literature, poetry, media, without forgetting the science of flows, transport organization, infrastructure, the hydrographic system, and industry in its various articulations. To think of arriving at a synthesis between these areas of knowledge is very far from being realized. Claude Levi-Strauss defined the city as "the hu-

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**Purini:**

Purini warns that 'technology' has replaced 'technique', a shift from something we can grasp and shape to something we merely use without understanding.

**Me:**

I see the same danger in AI: it's not just a tool anymore, it's a system we blindly follow. We need to reclaim our right to understand, to question, to pause. Because real creativity, like real architecture, happens in the space between knowing and doing, not just clicking and generating.

not entirely positive. The second characteristic is a totalizing *conception of technology*, a term that has overshadowed the more proper one of technique, which I have always preferred. The difference between the two words lies in the fact that the former, the most recent, affirms a cognitive primacy considered as a sort of mysterious knowledge that only a few know, while the latter indicates the ordering, organizational modalities, and concrete actions of building with which the expected result is obtained. The content of technology, if what I have said is correct, would then be the existence of a surplus value that the discourse on technique produces with respect to technique itself. Technology is, therefore, an *augmented technique*, so to speak, a higher state of the concrete dimension of doing. The third

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**Purini:**

One major problem with global architecture is the loss of connection between the city and architecture. Urban analysis, typology, and morphology, once essential, have been abandoned. Instead of designing in response to place, memory, and context, buildings are now randomly scattered like interchangeable objects. Places, in contrast, are deep, layered, shaped by site + history, interpreted through human experience.

**Me:**

When tools design for us, and we follow templates blindly, we risk flattening the richness of place. We get fast results, but generic ones. The human relationship between context, story, and form gets lost in the rush.

a higher state of the concrete dimension of doing. The third feature of global architecture is the *disappearance, in construction, of the fundamental relationship between the city and architecture*, which involves the two further cancellations of the *relationship between urban analysis and architectural design*, and the primary relationship between typology and morphology. In short, urban studies are now almost completely absent in faculties of architecture, as well as in the profession. Closely linked to the previous characteristic is the denial of places in favor of a random dissemination of buildings. Places are the result of the dialectic between site and history, they are archives of memory, narrative fields of settlement events, outcomes of complex and often formally prestigious interpretations of the soil in a plastic transformation that is always subjectively understood and interpreted. The fifth characteristic is recognized

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**Purini:**

Purini says digital architecture has become a kind of religion, unquestioned, idolized, mistaken for real progress.

**Me:**

I feel the same about AI and digital culture today. We confuse speed with wisdom, surface with depth. What we need is not more output, but more meaning.

perhaps its final phase. It is necessary that the history of places resumes making architecture more vivid and authentically expressive, for a long time a mysterious and humanly poetic medium between the past and the future. A medium that lives and will always live in the present.

With the eclipse, which I hope is not definitive, of the primary principles, the meaning of living has been lost, which I have summarized in a passage from the preceding paragraph. I believe that a militant orientation needs to be substituted for the widespread conviction that contemporary architecture is highly advanced, primarily through digital means, which is now not only mythologized knowledge but a genuine religion. Along with these primary principles, a reaffirmation of the human value of living expressed by the beauty of architecture needs to be put in its place. Such beauty is neither *elegance*, or the result of

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**Purini:**

Architecture is no longer guided by the imagination of the author, but by the logic of the software. This comes with the belief that "the virtual is the true real", that digital representations matter more than lived experience. The result: homogenization, a world where everything looks the same, speaks the same "Esperanto" of design. Architecture can still be the "substance of hoped-for things", something spiritual, imaginative, and deeply human.

**Me:**

AI is taking over our daily choices, not because it's evil, but because we're letting its logic replace our own. We're outsourcing imagination.

make a good stretch of road. Returning to the digital world, I have understood for some years now that the diffusion of BIM (Building Information Modeling) is not so much an agile tool, as one would expect, but a *priestly rite* that forces the project into a cage of consolidated solutions. In the digital universe, composing no longer seems to be an act that descends from the imagination of its author, but from the core of the notions that BIM proposes. All of this with the implicit conviction that to-day the virtual is the true real, while this is nothing but its simu-lacrum. Moreover, that today linguistic homogenization caused by a questionable Esperanto has won is not a simple opinion but a reality that is all too evident. Living the contradiction between the plurimillennial permanence of the first principles of archi-tecture and the changing conditions in which they are confirmed is an innovative, advanced, and urgent choice that, in addition to a necessary correction of the *efficientist materialism* of the prevailing neofunctionalism and the reduction of the environ-mental dimension to its sole aspects, we are experiencing con-siderable and worrying critical moments. This requires logical clarity, great confidence, and remarkable courage. Architecture as the "substance of hoped-for things", remembering Edoardo Persico, will certainly be able to preserve, renew and give a new soul to living. What I have said is addressed to people like me

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## Esperanto

Esperanto is a constructed (invented) language, created in the late 1800s by L. L. Zamenhof. His goal was to make an easy-to-learn, politically neutral language that people all over the world could use to communicate, kind of like a universal second language. It never became truly global, but it's still spoken today by a small international community.

## Why does Purini (and I) use "Esperanto" as a metaphor?

Modern architecture has lost its diversity, everything now speaks the same generic, international language.