

## **Toward Group Form**

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What kind of living space shall there be for men who have shaken off the dust of the Middle Ages? This was a fundamental question which started a new movement in modern architecture. "Less is more," or "From God's scale to human scale." These phrases well illustrate a basic principle of the modern spirit. In a sense, the new movement was the development of the modern spirit itself, while it was taking the form of visual expression.

In parallel with this movement, the development of modern painting took a similar course. For instance, the freedom in form and color, uninhibited expression of individual feelings, the acceptance of fantasy, or experimentation to expose even the inner world of man on canvas, all these are attempts to visualize the modern spirit.

There is, however, one great difference between these two pioneering movements in the course of development, although both are closely related to the development of the modern spirit. Whereas architecture has been more conscious of logic and principles, painting has been more individualistic. In architecture, our society has been always either much generalized or idealized; in painting, on the contrary, society has been always expressed through the inner eyes of individual painters. (There are some exceptions, of course, like Gaudi who was an extremely individualistic architect or Mondrian who was a painter with a more scientific approach.)

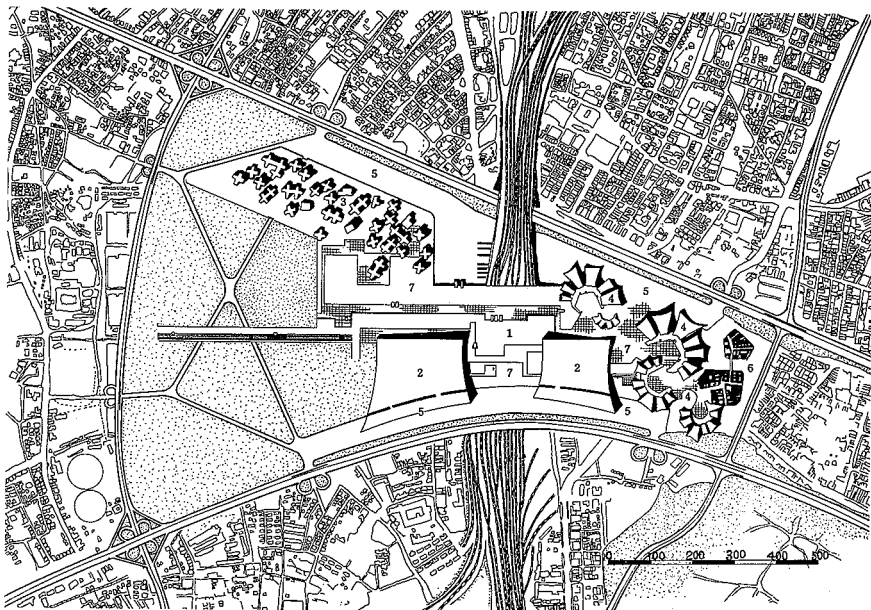
Through this development, modern painting has become so diverse and personal that in certain instances any identity or common ground with the rest of society is difficult to detect. On the other hand, architecture has gradually lost its individuality and manifold expressions, and as a result, the architect's concept of our society is becoming more stereotyped.

We thus now face a turning point in architecture and painting. Lately, however, the criticism of functional architecture, the rise of regionalism, and intense discussion of the relationship between tradition and modern architecture all indicate that architects are again becoming interested in individuality and regional expression in building. Our architecture is moving forward. Yet so far there has been no strong attempt to create a new total image to express the vitality of our society, at the same time embracing individuality and retaining the identity of individual elements.

The biggest issue in contemporary politics and economics is the organization of an orderly society without sacrificing the fundamental freedom of the individuals who make up the society. In the pursuit of this idea men of the coming age must meet this challenge in politics and economics.

In architecture and urbanism, as in politics and economics, we must build up new concepts and methods that will not only strengthen the individuality of our visual environment but also endow the physical forms of our world with qualities that truly mirror our rapidly changing society.

We believe that the concept of group form we are now proposing will be one of the most vital methods in this respect. For although we are conscious of the architectural development of the individual buildings that are elements of the group, we try also to create a total image through the group, that is again a reflection of growth and decay in our life process. This is an effort to conceive a form in relationship to an ever-changing whole and its parts.



[Shinjuku district restoration, ground plan.] Master form: **1.** Shinjuku terminal—trains + subway + buses + taxis; **2.** shopping town—550,000 square feet, twice present shopping space; **3.** office town—working place for 70,000 people; **4.** amusement square—twice present amusement space; **5.** garage way—slow traffic + parking space for 20,000 cars; **6.** old town; **7.** esplanade—sun, shade, and water.

## Toward group form

In the past, man has tried to discover the secret of natural phenomena and the substance of the universe. In the latter half of the twentieth century, however, in the fields of both science and the humanities, we are more concerned with grasping the total picture and the underlying relations among phenomena rather than the study of individual phenomena.

We now limit our discussion to the problem of structure in our urban society. Compared with ancient and medieval cities, modern cities are characterized by:

1. The coexistence and conflict of amazingly heterogeneous institutions and individuals.
2. Unpredictably rapid and extensive transformations in society.

It is questionable, however, whether in urban design we have the visual language with which we can create the space that responds to and comprehends such characteristics of our urban society. Most of our cities fall either into utter confusion or monotonous patterns built by a few dogmatic architects. Such cities lack individuality not only in the elements that perform their complex functions, but also an overall unifying character. They also lack elasticity and flexibility in adjusting to social and economic change. We again lack an adequate visual language to cope with the superhuman scale of modern highway systems and with views from airplanes.

The idea of *group form* which we suggest here begins with solving such problems. Our idea of group form stands firmly against the image we have had in architecture for thousands of years; that is, the image of a single structure, complete in itself — for example, the Pyramids, the Parthenon, a Gothic church—or the Seagram building by Mies van der Rohe. Our idea stands also against the other image of making an exquisite static composition, using several buildings as its elements, for instance, the Horyu-ji, the Piazza San Marco, Chandigarh, or Brasilia. In short, we are trying to surpass these approaches.

In this “group architecture” just mentioned, the relationship between the elements and the totality may be represented as  $TOTALITY = \sum ELEMENTS$ , and the balance thus obtained is destroyed at the moment a single element is taken out of the group.

In the group form, on the other hand, the relationship is represented as  $TOTALITY \supset \sum ELEMENTS$ , where  $\supset$  = inclusion.

Here the totality embraces the elements; in other words, the total image of the group is not basically altered, even though some elements are taken out, or different elements added.

Now comes the question of conceiving and grasping such a total image and also investigating the systems of these elements out of which the whole is built up.

In our proposed Shinjuku redevelopment project, this idea is applied as follows:

The amusement squares, for instance, are conceived as images of flowers. The plaza forms a center about which opera houses, theaters, concert halls, movie theaters, variety theaters, etc., radiate like petals. The total image will be well maintained even if certain petals are missing. In the shopping town, the spaces for various shopping activities for retailing, wholesaling, window shopping, drinking, eating, and chatting, all are conceived as a group. Then in the office town, the group of towers extends densely in a tight space like the Milky Way. While in single structures columns, beams, arches, and other devices are used to create space freely, in the group form, walls, shafts, floors, and units<sup>1</sup> are basic components for building the visual

environment. Space within and without is developed simultaneously. Accepting certain accidental design results, we shall be able to express the feeling of concentrated urban energy in the group form.

In city planning the concept of "master planning" has been often criticized for the following shortcomings: First, the whole plan cannot be comprehended until it is completed. Second, when completed, it may well become socially obsolete. Then, at the worst, the plan is never completed. A master plan is basically a static concept, whereas the concept of master form we are proposing here is dynamic. Master form is an entity that is elastic and enduring through any change in a society. Therefore, master form is one of the principles of a more dynamic approach in urban design, and the concept of group form is basic to the conception of the master form. Group form by no means denies the validity of single structure architecture or of architectural groups. Rather it includes them. We consider a "static composition" one possibility in the group form. The group form after all is the pursuit of a total image. Therefore, it is not necessary to limit composition to inorganic, geometrical, structural, or mechanical patterns. Rather group form is an intuitive, visual expression of the energy and sweat of millions of people in our cities, of the breath of life and the poetry of living.

#### **Note**

1. *Wall*: Any medium which separates space horizontally. *Floor*: Any medium which separates space vertically. *Shaft*: Element which transfers objects from one level to another. *Unit*: A cell or block which performs a specific function.