Record’s Top 125 Buildings

A selection of the most significant works that defined architecture in our era.

To commemorate ARCHITECTURAL RECORD’s 125th anniversary, our editors have chosen to honor 125 of the most important works of architecture built since the magazine’s founding in 1891. This was not an easy task. We started by polling a group of distinguished critics and scholars for nominations, but the final list is ours. While many inclusions are obvious, others may be surprising, or a little controversial—as are some omissions. And, we know, all 125 might not make the list at RECORD’s next big birthday: time inevitably changes not only our tastes, but how we understand history.

1891
Wainwright Building
St. Louis
Adler & Sullivan

1899
Glasgow School of Art
Glasgow
Charles Rennie Mackintosh

1906
Larkin Building
Buffalo
Frank Lloyd Wright

1906
Morgan Library & Museum
New York
McKim, Mead & White

1906
Austrian Postal Savings Bank
Vienna
Otto Wagner

1908
Gamble House
Pasadena, California
Greene & Greene

1908
Unity Temple
Oak Park, Illinois
Frank Lloyd Wright

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**Heydar Aliyev Centre** | Baku, Azerbaijan | Zaha Hadid Architects

Here Hadid had a project with enough scope to prove her long-evolving theses about architecture as a topographical field and about the interaction of the building with the ground around it. The building grows from a field highly articulated with ramps, gardens, and pools. By verticalizing its curving plan, the building becomes a mountainous topography of fluid form and space. The design also realizes the promise of the computer as an agent of architectural liquefaction, bending even the technology of the standard space frame into enveloping curves. —Joseph Giovannini
Visions of the Future

A group of prominent architects discuss their forecasts for the decades ahead.

MY PHRASE for the civilization we now live in is post–Fordist network society. Architecture needs to converge around ideas for this new era—the paradigm of parametricism—as it did around Modernism in the 20th century. We need to enhance the capacity of the discipline, not only in terms of technological sophistication, but also by taking a more scientific approach with respect to social processes.

Cities will be the superbrains of our civilization. Enhanced research-and-development activity means that people will have to network and communicate all the time, and so we will make cities that are dense, open, permeable, and mixed. Each building is a device that invites, structures, and frames interactions, and so the primary task of future architects will be communication design. At the same time, the division of labor into specialisms will continue. Architects will be in charge of the overall layout, aesthetic articulation, and semiology of a building, but they will distribute all technical elements to others, including engineers, programmers, and contractors.

If the core competency of architects is to translate the life process of an institution into space and form, and to make sure that the final product communicates as expected, architecture must develop a more sophisticated account of the built environment as a system of signification. For that, we need to upgrade the discipline’s intellectual capacity. Architectural theory will need greater rigor, like that found in economics or the social sciences, and it will need to flow more directly into the work of the practicing architect.

We will also see a greater role for artificial intelligence in the creation and operation of the built environment, and the emergence of responsive environments—intelligent buildings that can signal dynamically what is going on within. This expands the communicative potential of architecture, and also feeds hard data back into an enhanced disciplinary dis-

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THE WAY we practice architecture will be totally different in the future—not just because tools and contexts change, but because the young people studying today are absolutely different from my generation.

First, there are the number of women entering the profession. There are now more female students in architecture schools than men. This will alter the profession because women don’t manage their time, or relate to the client and architecture, in the same way as men. At the moment, there are not many women running offices, but in the next 25 years, they will be there.

Another factor is that today’s young people don’t want to be salaried employees. They want their own companies. They want to learn by doing, to be hands-on in making things. They are highly adaptable and think in terms of individuals and small groups’ sharing a platform. Big firms have to be very structured, like a machine, and we know that big machines are not efficient anymore. A two-person start-up can invent a new way of doing things. It has to happen in architecture.

In the school I founded, Confluence, I push the students to be entrepreneurial. That doesn’t mean they will necessarily build buildings. When you are educated in architecture, you are able to face very complex questions and work at many scales. It’s a unique way of thinking. We could apply it to many problems in commerce and society. Some companies are already involving writers, anthropologists, and philosophers to help them to think differently and evolve their business. Why not architects?