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LETTERS

LICENSED TO LEARN

Education, to have *validity*, must have *value*. Does earning a degree in architecture have value as preparation to be a maker of real, physical, built things—or is it merely to be seen as a course in architectural *appreciation*?

With all the glory showered upon people who have either failed to pass the Architectural Registration Examination, or are too slothful, or don't believe the trivialities of law apply to them—what is the point of any student's striving to achieve the legal status of being able to call oneself an architect?

The dark side of architectural education is that period of time after graduation during which the presumption is that one's employer—if, indeed, it's possible to find an employ-

er—will take the responsibility of teaching the newly-minted graduate a) how to build; b) how to build a practice; and c) how to negotiate the legal and regulatory pitfalls of practice.

Increasingly, this paradigm is failing. According to data from the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, it now takes, on average, 12 to 15 years from graduation to successfully complete the ARE, a process originally envisioned to take no more than three years. Is this a failure of the system or a symptom of apathy? I have no answer, but the stats are appalling. In part, I believe it's that we have lost the art of passing down the accumulated knowledge in the studio owing to an overweening reliance on the computer. It has killed the

studio ethic of continual and experienced feedback. The gestalt of viewing an image on a screen is entirely different from that of viewing a drawing.

Sure, licensure is great, and it's a worthy first step. But what do we architects know about building? Only what our work experience has taught us. It would have been nice to have learned more of the art of building in school. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc at the French Academy in Rome, circa 1867, said construction and aesthetics must not be separated. We must know how to build, and this must be taught in school.

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