

different surroundings? Behind that question is the assumption that it matters how works of art are displayed, that indeed no work can be seen unrelated to its context.

In the writings on museum and exhibition design, the most frequently implied but also often stated suggestion – usually by non-architects – was that architects ought to strive for a ‘neutral or anonymous’ background. This is, of course, a fanciful concept. Every background – white wall or red damask – has some quality which is unavoidably present and which is in some dialogue, constructive or otherwise, with the object on view. We may make verbal specifications such as ‘anonymity’ but they have no visual equivalent. Architecture, even when seemingly ruled entirely by convention, is the product of thought; there cannot be an architecture of non-thought.

Perhaps it should be in reverse order, for we learn before we practice. On the other hand it is the office – or studio or workshop – which is responsible for architecture, for the buildings that surround us. It should therefore take precedence. An alternative view might be that both are important and that it is unprofitable to exaggerate the differences between them. Both are, after all, involved in non-verbal thinking and both are part of the culture of architecture. What may also be of some significance is that the way architecture is taught is very similar throughout most of the world. As a result there may be considerable similarity in how it is practised in large parts of the world.

Most of architectural education is based on project work. This is structured around a sequence which normally starts off with problem definition, continues as a number of sketch schemes which are progressively criticised and refined and then finally presented and judged. This is very close to the Popperian P_1 and P_2 sequence with considerable emphasis on both the tentative solution and error elimination stages in terms of both student effort and teaching time. The distribution of examination marks is a direct indication of where the emphasis is placed in a school of architecture. In most institutions, design project work is allocated 50% or more of the total available marks, by far the biggest percentage given to any single subject.

The sequence of work may be very similar in the office but the character of both the tentative solutions and the error elimination criticism may differ markedly. The serious temptation in the office, particularly the average office, is to neglect the tentative nature of the first solution and to go to a safe answer which follows a known type. A great many problems in architecture are self-imposed and it is very easy – and probably more lucrative – to avoid setting oneself too many difficulties; enough exist, as it is, to get any building off the ground.

The error elimination tests are likely to be more wide ranging in the office than the school and perhaps also more