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## «How important is it that your students are critical, Mr. Kerez?»

«You address a question we have discussed quite intensely at the chair. I taught the first year students for 8 thinking. I do not believe that the students are not critical anymore, rather the pressure in the field of architecture has increased enormously over the last 10 to 20 be doing later in their practice.» years. There is really a change going on in the conditions of architecture that I observe with anxiety. There "The model of the studio—the idea of having an expeis in Swiss competitions today an enormous number of rienced architect showing the way to younger stuthings that you have to prepare, to solve and to prove dents—has a very strong bias towards dogmatism. as an architect that did not even exist before.

I participated in two major international avoid it and actually foster a critical culture?» competitions: the Royal College of Art, in London, and they were the most interesting projects that were dis- cally correct or not. cussed. Times were different, the debate in competi-Parc de la Villette by OMA than the winning competition entry.

wonder if it's really the professor's responsibility to ensure this. Because it's exactly what is not on the agenda of an authoritarian professor-student relationship; Can you imagine the teacher giving the grades and saying: (my dear students you were not critical enough, especially not towards me so you only get a low pass.

We are to a certain extent successfully helping the diploma students to develop a critical understanding. We have been cultivating a climate of debate with them for several years. As a teacher, my role is not to tell them: 'please do this' or 'I think this is bad This text is taken from the skype interview with Christian Kerez led the because it's not classical or not modern or oplease do 9th of June 2017 by Vincent Bianchi and Yann Salzmann.

refer more to the buildings of Luigi Caccia Dominioni». It is rather the meaning of the brief which is important to me. What does it mean that this brief is selected for this context?>, or <what does it mean that you now make such a proposal? In practice, it becomes hard to ask all these basic questions. They are time consuming, years, and during the 5th or 6th year I wondered, What difficult and possibly preventing you from winning is the most strongly needed asset for an architectural because they do not put the jury in a comfortable posistudent today? We figured that it's exactly critical tion. In this sense, it is a freedom for them to think about the meaning or the story behind a given program. It helps the students to investigate what they will

Could you say that you propose something different to

the Beyeler Foundation in Basel. In both cases, both «As I have explained you earlier, I am not the master of juries tried to prevent journalists from debating the the student; I do not tell him what to do. This means result of the competitions or making a comparison that they have to come up with ideas and proposals between the projects. Architectural juries today are themselves. We insist on this demand especially with notoriously afraid of any debate, even if there are so the diploma students. We differentiate between an many competitions actually that the public lost inter- authentic and personal idea and a convention, a generic est. Whereas it is actually only the debate that makes scheme as you see often in competitions. This has competitions in architecture interesting. Is a painting nothing to do with personal or aesthetic preferences. It by Ad Reinhart better than a painting by Liechtenstein? is hard work to find your own attitude, your personal Is a proposal by Sanaa better than a proposal by OMA? approach towards architecture. It is very painful and They have both different attitudes, different under- stressful. A Lot of students do not appreciate to be taken standings of architecture and the difference between out of their comfort zone and say that we do not know two proposals comes out of that. The jury has to find what we want from them, which we somehow also do criteria to evaluate them and the public has to debate out of conviction. If a student does not find an idea, for these criteria. In the last 10 years, there has been a total whatever reason, He will fail. I am critical in this sense. loss of critical debates on architecture together with a I do not only wish I could help the students become dramatic increase in architectural investments, the scale more critical I am also critical towards what they are and in the political impact of the buildings. When doing. They have to convince me that what they pres-I went to university, Martin Steinmann would describe ent is really their own thought, their own understandcompetition entries from Jaques Herzog and Pierre ing. In the end, It is the statement of a project that de Meuron which were not even winning prizes. Still matters to me, no matter if this might be politi-

Next semester our chair will be doing sometion was actually more important than who won or lost thing new. We will first work on the definition of space, them. I remember much better the [sensation] of the its perception and understanding. With this knowledge, the students will enter Swiss competitions. It will not be about square meters, cost estimation, and all I think that we are witnessing the end of an this non-architectural arguments. It will be about era. It is time for a new generation to take over. In this space, about architecture; whether or not you can still sense, we were thinking: how can we help the students think about spaces in this very restricted area of Swiss to develop a critical understanding?, but I honestly competitions and at the same time do your work as an architect.»