6 Architects Look at Honolulu



INGLESON



OSSIPOFF



TATOM



WELLS



WIMBERLY



WONG

The trouble with Honolulu architecture, according to at least two local architects, is that it lacks character.

Architect John P. Tatom was asked to characterize Honolulu architecture.

"It can no longer be characterized," he said, "and this is the great problem. At one time, say 1930, it had an identity of small scale 'tropical feeling' buildings, with a generally quiet and respectful look.

"Unfortunately, the increase in the size of buildings has been accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the sensitivity and care with which the owners have approached their projects."

Architect Vladimir Ossipoff:

"The better residential architecture of Honolulu is of a high order—unfettered, rich because of its multi-racial background and free because of the benevolent climate.

"Commercial architecture is without direction, characterless and largely oblivious of the same benevolent climate."

TATOM AND Ossipoff were among six members of the Hawaii Chapter of the American Institute of Architects who participated in preparation of a nine-part critique of Honolulu buildings which appeared in The Advertiser.

The others were Lewis Ingleson, Thomas O. Wells, George J. Wimberly and Howard M. Y. Wong.

Wimberly says of Honolulu architecture:

"In my opinion, it is superior to that of most cities."

But Ingleson sees it like this:

"As in most American cities, Honolulu's architecture runs the gamut from very good to extremely bad. All too often, it is inappropriate to Island life. By this I do not mean we should be building sentimental pseudo-Polynesian structures, but rather buildings that take into account all aspects and peculiarities of the Islands . . . "

ALL SIX feel architecture is an art.

Wong said it is "concerned about esthetics . . . and seeks to combine steel, wood and stone so that they emerge as an integrated solution that stimulates the senses in addition to satisfying a purely functional requirement . . . "

Each was asked to identify his favorite building in Honolulu. Wong said his choice was the just demolished Castle & Cooke building. Wimberly declined to answer. Ingleson replied, "The one I'm presently working on," but later said he felt the Academy of Arts was the most "appropriate" building.

Wells and Tatom also selected the Academy of Arts and Ossipoff picked the Academy of Arts and the C. Brewer & Co. building.

Wells said the Academy of Arts is "a never-ending series of delightful lights and shades."

He said the Academy is "a beautiful example of the profound effect that a totally well conceived building can have on an area. Thomas Square is a better square because of the Academy of Arts . . . "

DO ESTHETICS and economics clash?

"All the time," said Tatom. The best of architecture has been the result of enlightened financiers at work, and the worst, directly the responsibility of money lenders with the narrowest view of a building's use."

Wong replied:

" . . . If esthetics, function and maintenance are ignored, then the designer is a poor architect and the owner an even poorer businessman."

CAN A GOOD architect make an inexpensive building attractive through use of functional materials in a pleasing way?

Wells: "Yes, this is the architect's main function—to make a building beautiful because of what it is and not in spite of it."

Tatom: "Yes. As the most elementary example, consider the paint job on a building. Imagine a 25-story building painted purple. The same process is true for all elements in a building. Given a budget, it is the total of many sensitive selections and judgments that mean success or failure. Money is not involved."

WHAT IS the role of the planner, engineer and builder-developer in beautifying a city?

Ingleson: "For all three, a role of leadership. They are the environment-makers. They should strive to be aware of what the community wants and proceed to provide that."

Wells: "Every stone that is laid determines the character of our city and every person connected with the industry of laying these stones has the responsibility to himself and his community that the affect of his work will make our city a better and more beautiful place."

What might the community do to encourage better architecture?

Ossipoff: "Demand better architecture."

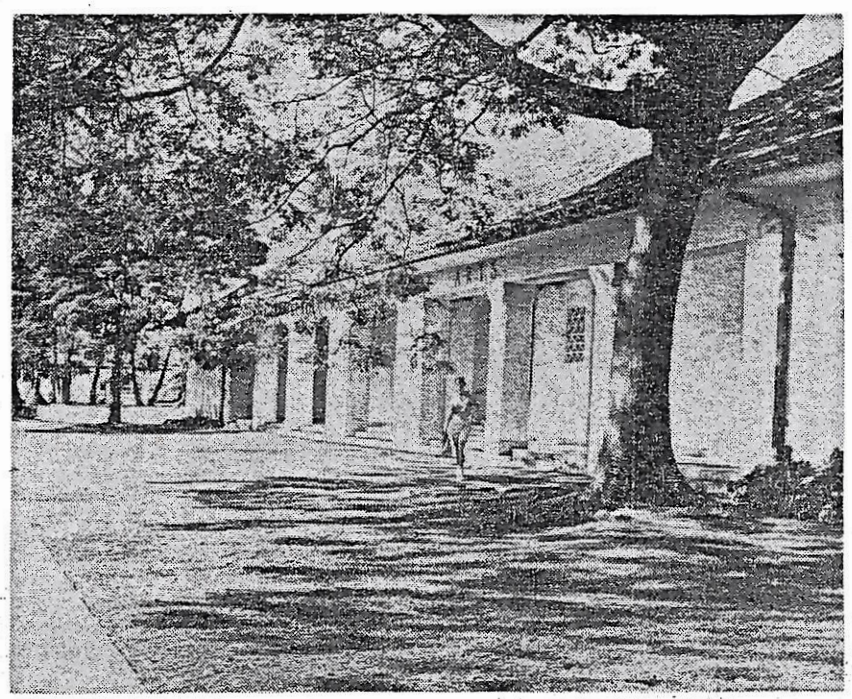
Wong: "The community can cultivate an awareness of the architecture about them—the homes they live in, the buildings they work in, the surrounding they play in. Through greater awareness, a sense of what is right and appropriate will develop and the community will come to require better architecture in its environment."

Tatom: "The public should become involved as it does in other civic matters . . . I am constantly impressed by the fact that lay people generally seem to recognize the difference between a good building and one which is badly done."

What can State and local government do toward improving architecture?

Wimberly: "They should have the best local architects available. The best architects are not hard to find. Any person in charge of the selection of an architect for a building, either public or private, can find out what an architect's reputation is. The best may not be the most experienced."

Ingleson: "Demand the best."



Honolulu Architects rate Academy of Arts high as a work of art.