

INTRODUCTION: EXHIBIT OF THE WORKS OF MR. ARSENIO ABELLA

Tonight we will be seeing the creative efforts of the young Artist-Architect, Mr. Arsenio Abella.

Down the pages of history, we see the illustrious names – dreaded names of Michelangelo, Le Corbusier, Eero Saarinen, Frank L.I. Wright and others, coming down in an endless parade in the firmament of Architecture.

They showed us the way architecture should take. Clearly, they have shown us that architecture is not only useful – it should also be beautiful at the same time. Paul Rodulf would like to call this factor as the 4th dimension – meaning, the soul of the building.

Many believe that architecture is only functional while others may say it is only art. Most of us may say it is a Utilitarian art. Whatever it may be, the consensus of opinion is that architecture in the end, must look beautiful and noble, even in ruins – as is the Greek Parthenon; – that architecture must look beautifully awe-inspiring even when shrouded in the mystery of rain, fog, smog or in winter.

The question then, is, -what is that factor – that element, that could invest an architectural piece with that quality that elicits in us, our sense of beauty, dignity, nobility – in short, all the finer side of our being.

We suspect that it is form – mathematical form filtering through a temperament both elemental and human – or it may be form resulting from pure emotion or intuition tempered with mathematics. These two alternatives are what we might call the international or rational and the organic or romantic sides of architecture. These are the two polar extremes in Architectural forms. Of course, there are the in-between movements.

This explains the concern for FORM among great Architects down the ages. Realizing this it would be a source of wonderment that the study of form, for its own sake and or as it relates to architecture, has been largely, if not totally ignored in most schools of architecture in our country. Students have a hazy idea of what form is, and are just left to themselves when the question of form comes along. Yet, almost always we hear of people talking about form and function.

As heir to the historical concept of formal necessity, Mr. Abella has resolved to strengthen his sense of form through a series of formal explorations and experimentations. What he is exhibiting today is a result of those efforts. He has explored and experimented with forms that are void, flat, solid – and into colors as purveyors of forms.

These formal explorations recall to mind Le Corbusier in whose office, one would find a drafting table for his architectural drafting and an easel for art works serving as a point of departure for his fanciful search for form

At this juncture, I am reminded of a Scientist who said that "the science of today is the technology of tomorrow". Similarly, we can say that the FORM of today is the Architecture of tomorrow. This, Mr. Abella, I am sure, firmly believes. This belief, valid as it may be is shared by most of our Architects, old or young.

Varied questions arise – could it be our basic Oriental mind which look at things in a more romantic way or is it due to the non-realization of the importance of formal studies on the part of those in charge of the education of our young Architects?

In the mid-50's, we tried to correct this situation but it is only recently that we see the effects of that effort, in the works of the younger generations of Architects. Among the older ones there is evidently the fear to tread on new grounds – a sure sign of age.. The spirit of youthful experimentation and exploration must be made to spur progress in Architecture.

So, we find that where before, students studied only functions which tend to make them experts, now they know that significant form could well be the missing factor that could place the Filipino designers in the mainstream of world architecture.

To Mr. Abella, I would like to say – keep up that spirit of youth.

MARTINO A. ABELLANA
October, 1984