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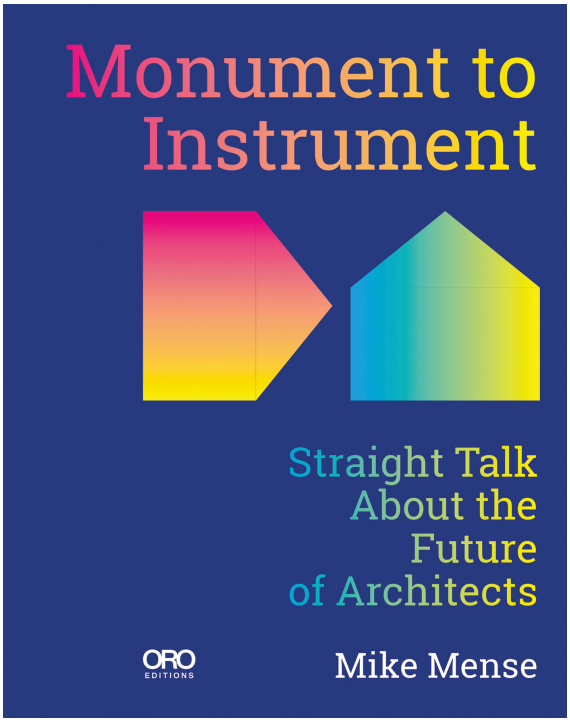

Monument to Instrument

Straight Talk About the Future of Architects

Mike Mense

ISBN	9781966515579
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- Based on the opinion that architects must play an increasingly important role if North American society is to survive climate change and immigration; and a belief that being primarily defined as artists is limiting that role, this book argues for a redefinition of architects as the experts on the relationships between humans and built environments
- An argument for a radical re-understanding of the profession of architecture, and for a radical reconstitution of architectural education
- A history of how the practice of architecture has changed over time
- An argument and strategies for healing the current disconnect between architects and the general public
- An argument for the democratisation of architecture and the resultant increase in the importance of art in everyone's life
- Many books have bemoaned America's apparent failure to appropriately appreciate architecture. Their solution is typically that "we" must convince Americans of the importance of art. This book instead argues for bringing the architects to the public, without in any way downgrading the importance of the art of architecture

Architects must play an important role if American society is to survive climate change and immigration. Defining ourselves as artists limits that role. This book argues for a redefinition of architects as the experts on the relationships between humans and built environments. Architects must come to the public rather than asking the public to come to them. Consequently, the book attempts through "straight talk" to avoid the poetic language prevalent among architects writing about architecture.

The author's position arises from principles developed during 50 years of practice, including: "Radical Functionalism," practicing towards tight fit based on comprehensive programming; "Extreme Programming," inspired by the writings of Ian McHarg and Louis Kahn's conversations with bricks, a belief that there are many right answers and definitively wrong answers; "Legitimate Individuation," searching for right answers based on a wide-ranging discovery of specifics of the project, including site characteristics, client wishes, current architect enthusiasms, community concerns and locally available skills and materials; and "Everything for a Reason, Artfully Done," a goal that we and the client understand every move's purpose and that every move contributes to the art of the project.

Mike Mense, FAIA, has a 1973 Virginia Tech B.Arch. with highest honours and a 2016 CCNY master's in urban design. Leading mmenseArchitect(s) since 1979, he chaired the 2012 AIA Committee on Design and, with morphosis, won the Alaska Capitol Competition.



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