

Dennis Sharp



Imagine the romantic English country side, a sweet little church and beautiful weather. It was here, encased in tradition, that in sadness we brought prof. Dennis Sharp (1933) to his grave. It was as if the Modernist showed us Kant's point of view that if neither reason nor experience can explain the existence of God, faith might fill the vacuum. This is part of the poem Dennis selected for the service:

**"God of concrete, God of steel,
God of piston and of wheel
God of pylon, God of steam,
God of girder and of beam..."**

**Lord of science, Lord of art
God of map and graph and chart
Lord of physics and research
Word of bible, faith in church
Lord of sequence and design
All the world of truth is thine"**

Dennis died on the 6th May after a serious illness that bothered him for several years. He leaves behind his wife Yasmin, his daughter Melani, his son Deen and many friends all over the world. He was a universal man: architect, scholar, critic, writer, teacher, bookseller, cook and walking encyclopedia. He collaborated with architects like Santiago de Calatrava. His books *Modern Architecture and Expression* (1966) and *20th century architecture – a visual history* (1972) became classics. He made exhi-

bitions, was the editor of the magazine *World Architecture*, he was professor at the Open University and for the development of **docomomo** he was of vital importance.

In 1990 we first met when Dennis came to the founding conference of **docomomo** in Eindhoven. He formed part of the strong UK delegation my friend Christopher Dean brought in his slipstream: Catherine Cooke, John Allen, Sherban Cantacuzino, Martin Pawley, James Dunnet and Peter Palumbo a.o. The latter came by private helicopter just to present his support to our initiative. From this first beginning Dennis put his heart into **docomomo**.

It is difficult to find photos in our archive where he is not smiling. One of the best is where he participates in the tango competition at the 4th international **docomomo** conference in Sliac, Slovakia. Forever young, hat on, arm stretched forward, big smile, he flies out of the picture. Here is the Modernist at heart. "While I breathe, I hope" was a motto he used.

The very first words he presented in his paper to his new **docomomo** friends at our founding Conference were: "Finding a definition for modern architecture is difficult enough. The cultural evaluation of it is even more problematic. Modernism is an attitude of mind; around view;... "Later he wrote: "Modernity that gives root to the Modern Movement is a cultural mode, a form of civilization which permeated the world from the West, opposed to the idea of "tradition", that is to say all earlier traditions, and is unswervingly dedicated to fundamental economic and social transformation". And: "Modern Architecture kept persistently to its aim of revolutionizing Modern Life".

While debating criteria for the international selection of the key Modern Movement buildings world wide, it was Dennis who – after length deliberations concluded: "Modern Architecture should essentially be seen as socially, technically and aesthetically innovative". And it is this definition of Modern Movement Architecture that we have used ever since.

His contributions to **docomomo** were plenty and important. He assisted with the original text of the **docomomo** constitution and the Eindhoven statement in 1990. For years he was a crucial member of the international specialist committee on registers. Together with Catherine Cooke he edited the book: *Modern Movement in Architecture; selections from the Docomomo Registers*. Through the articles he wrote, papers he presented and his contributions to debates he kept us on our toes. His network of friends over the world was instrumental in establishing new contacts. It is through Dennis that for example the formation of **docomomo** Japan came about, now one of our most active national working parties.

Also nationally he was a catalyst. He was chairman of **docomomo** UK for many years and his beloved shop

was a beehive for debate in London.

Dennis, on behalf of all the **docomomo** community I thank you for your intellectual contribution, your loyalty and enthusiasm. Let us be inspired forever by your exam-

ple: "While I breathe, I hope".

Hubert-Jan Henket
Honorary president of **docomomo**

Dennis Sharp in commemoration

From about 1995 on, Dennis Sharp has participated as an active member in the International Specialist Committee on Registers. With his exhaustive knowledge, incredible energy and far reaching network, he has enriched the committee in an invaluable manner. He was always on the move, had seen the most recent exhibitions or read an important publication or produced one himself. More importantly, together with Catherine Cooke he has edited the so-called 'Black book' on Modern Movement Architecture with selections from the Docomomo registers in 2000, a labourious task for which we are still very much indebted to both of the editors. Before that, he had contributed substantially to the advisory report on the World Heritage List and the Modern Movement (1997) by his broad overview. The committee will remember as well, with great joy and respect, how well he had organised the annual meeting and the international registers seminar on the Postwar Modern House (2006)

in conjunction with visits to the great exhibition on the Modern Movement in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the specially opened private houses. Dennis was always present and had always special stories to tell and witty comments on what we saw or discussed.

He shared his knowledge in a very open manner and he was an attentive listener during our working sessions as well. When we organised our last annual meeting in Oviedo, we knew that he was, to our deep regret, already too ill to come over to Spain. But none of us could know in April, that he would pass away so soon afterwards. The sad news reached us in May.

We will miss Dennis deeply and we would like to commemorate him here with great respect and gratefulness for all his work and his enthusiast involvement.

Panayotis Tournikiotis, chair ISC/Registers
Marieke Kuipers, vice-chair ISC/Registers

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Dennis Sharp and the History of Modern Architecture

Commitment was the watchword of the life and work of Dennis Sharp, the famous architect, professor, curator, editor, historian and architecture critic. His life began in England, on November 30 1933, and came to an end in the same country almost eight decades later, on May 6 2010. His career was marked by constant activity, both in the academic field, where he was a prolific author and renowned professor, and in the realm of architecture and its conservation. The range of activities to which he devoted himself clearly reveals this man's deep-rooted passion, and we shall always recall the clarity of his ideas and the eloquence of his words.

Having completed his architecture studies at the Architectural Association, London, and graduated in history at Liverpool University, he became Leverhulme Fellow in Architecture at the latter institution and held a chair between 1963 and 1968. He also taught at the AA, where

he was head of the Art and History Department between 1969 and 1982, a position he combined with teaching work in a number of university institutes both in England and abroad, notably at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, and the Académie Internationale d'Architecture, in Sofia. At the same time, he was Editor General of the Architectural Association, being responsible for *AA Quarterly* and *AA Papers*. Later he was appointed Editor of *World Architecture* and, more recently, as an example of his endeavours to disseminate architecture, he took charge of the Art Book publishing house, characterised by an entirely new approach to the world of architecture.

The publication of his first books was a crucial event, as these works became indispensable to the study of 20th-century architecture: *Modern Architecture and Expressionism*, 1966; *A Visual History of 20th-Century Architecture*, 1972; *Form and Function: A Source Book*

for the *History of Architecture & Design 1890-1939*, 1975; and *Sources of Modern Architecture: A Critical Bibliography*, 1967. Subsequently he focused on individual architects and movements in works such as *Santiago Calatrava*, 1992; *Kisho Kurokawa: From the Age of the Machine to the Age of Life*, 1998; *The Rationalists and the Anti-Rationalists*, 2000; *Eco Architecture-Eco cities*, 2002; *Bauhaus: Dessau*, 2002; and *Connell Ward and Lucas*, 2008, among many others.

Turning now to other aspects of his career, Sharp was a regular and impassioned contributor to international forums. In 1979 he participated in the first international meeting, held in Barcelona, of the International Committee of Architectural Critics, CICA, an organisation of which he was Chairman. He also organised several symposiums at the UIA congresses as well as instituting and coordinating the CICA Book Awards. Similarly, he

collaborated with Docomomo from its very beginnings, organising the Docomomo UK work team of which he was joint-chair at the time of his demise. Furthermore, he was a member of the International Specialist Committee on Register, the endeavours of which are described in the edition he prepared together with Catherine Cooke of *The Modern Movement in Architecture: Selections from the Docomomo Registers*, 2000.

By virtue of Sharp's constant presence in the different fields of world architecture, and his affable, generous personality, invariably sustained by rectitude and passionate defence of the twentieth-century heritage, his death was a considerable shock to his friends and very sad news for his colleagues and numerous readers and students.

Louise Noelle, chair **docomomo** Mexico

Farewell to the master's discipline Eliana Cárdenas

It is more common for disciples to write memories of their old masters than it is for a master to bear the hard news of the death of one of his disciples. It is painful and sad to face and deal with the death of Eliana Cardenas, the leading historian of architecture in Cuba. Having been invited to deliver lectures throughout the month of February at various universities in Spain – including one in Barcelona, recently announced in the website *Vitruvius* – she suffered an irreparable brain haemorrhage in Madrid, where she died on the 14th of March.

Eliana and I had worked together for 40 years, not only teaching history of architecture, but also conducting research work on Havana. In 1967, when the architecture course began, the school was undergoing a period of technocratic dogmatism. It had been "occupied" by the Ministry of Construction, who banned cultural and theoretical teaching on the grounds that 1970 was meant to be the year of the "10 million harvest" and therefore, the country should focus on this task and not allow intellectual ramblings. However, a group of teachers – Mario Coyula, Luis Lapidus, Emilio Escobar, Fernando Salinas, Roberto Gottardi and I – tried to fight and assure continuity in the teaching of cultural courses, which were resumed in 1970 after an unsuccessful "harvest". At that time, we had the support of some students such as Eliana Cardenas, who became one of the main protagonists of this struggle. Not only due to her passion for architecture – taken as a cultural phenomenon – but also because she was one of the few students who were interested in

poetry, literature, music and art, a quality that remained constant throughout her life. Her poems were published in Cuba and in Latin American magazines.

Following the discovery of Eliana's talent, in 1972 I invited her to join the research team that I supervised – *Grupo de Investigación de Historia de la Arquitectura y el Urbanismo (GIHAU)* – in order to develop a survey on Old Havana and conduct research on the city's historical evolution. These findings were afterwards materialized in a book called *La Habana. Transformación urbana en Cuba*, published in Spain by Gustavo Gili, in 1974. However, as graduated students were obliged to work away from Havana for two years, Eliana took up residence in the country's second city, Santiago de Cuba, where the School of Architecture had just been created. There she began to teach history of architecture and up until 1977, when she returned to Havana, she also worked as an adviser on Bayamo's and Guantánamo's city rehabilitation plans.

Upon returning to Havana, she was immediately invited to teach history of architecture at the Faculty, and together we created the university course of Theory and Criticism of Architecture, which was never well understood by students and consequently did not last long. However, we managed to write a book regarding our "marxist-semiology" vision, which achieved great success in Latin America, as our architectural analysis methodology was applied both in Ecuador – where the book was also published – and in Bolivia. In fact, even today Bolivian tu-