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Ira Drukier Dean of the College of Architecture, Art and Planning at Cornell University where he was also the Arthur L. and Isabel B. Wiesenberger Professor in Architecture. Previously, he was the Chairman of the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London.

Dean Mostafavi is a member of the trustees of the Van Alen Institute, and serves on the steering committee of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. At Harvard, Mostafavi co-chairs the Common Spaces Committee, is a member of the University's Committee on the Arts and the Standing Committee on Middle Eastern Studies. He chairs the North American jury of the Holcim Foundation Awards for Sustainable Construction. Previously he served on the design committee of the London Development Agency (LDA), the jury for the RIBA Gold Medal, and the advisory committee on campus planning of the Asian University for Women. He is currently involved as a consultant on a number of international architectural and urban projects.

He studied architecture at the AA, and undertook research on counter-reformation urban history at the Universities of Essex and Cambridge. Previously, he was Director of the Master of Architecture I Program at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. Dean Mostafavi has also taught at the University of Pennsylvania, Cambridge University, and the Frankfurt Academy of Fine Arts (Städelschule). His research and design projects have been published in many journals, including *The Architectural Review*, *AAFiles*, *Arquitectura*, *Bauwelt*, *Casabella*, *Centre*, *Daidalos*, and *El Croquis*. He is co-author of *Delayed Space* (with Homa Farjadi, Princeton Architectural Press, 1994); and *On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time* (with David Leatherbarrow, MIT, 1993) which received the American Institute of Architects prize for writing on architectural theory. Dean Mostafavi's recent publications include: *Approximations* (AA/MIT, 2002); *Surface Architecture* (MIT, 2002) which received the CICA Bruno Zevi Book Award; *Logique Visuelle* (Idea Books, 2003); *Landscape Urbanism: A Manual for the Machinic Landscape* (AA Publications, 2004); *Structure as Space* (AA Publications, 2006); *Ecological Urbanism* (Lars Müller Publishers, 2010); and *Implicate and Explicate: Aga Khan Award for Architecture* (Lars Müller Publishers, 2011).

The Harvard Recipe

INTERVIEW WITH MOHSEN MOSTAFAVI,

Dean and Alexander and Victoria Wiley Professor of Design at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

FOR CONDITIONS MAGAZINE BY BORIS BRORMAN JENSEN,
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BORIS BRORMAN JENSEN (BB): *The Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) offers an array of master programs, doctoral degrees, and professional development programs. Can you briefly describe the distinct programs and the different groups they are targeting?*

MOHSEN MOSTAFAVI (MM): What is interesting about the GSD is the fact that we have a combination of studio-based programs and non-studio-based programs. Our studio-based programs, in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban planning and design, are in many respects similar to some of the models in Europe, including Scandinavia. Though in the European model, people start their design education after high school. In many U.S. schools, design education occurs at the graduate level; the students who come to us already have a degree before they get here. Part of the challenge of teaching architecture, for exam-

ple, for those people who have a degree is: How is your curriculum, your pedagogy, and your emphasis different when you are providing a course of study for someone who has already had four years of education? The majority of them also acquired a lot of experience after they graduated. The average age of our students tends to be in the late twenties; students are typically twenty-seven or twenty-eight when they come here. Our programs are three and a half years for the master's programs.

We have master's programs in architecture and landscape architecture. We have what we call professional degree students and post-professional degree students, because we also have students who are studying for a master's who have already received a degree in architecture from somewhere else. Planning and urban design are two more areas of study. Apart from these programs, we have what we call

our advanced studies programs, which are the master in design studies, doctor of design, and Ph.D. The master in design studies programs follow tracks that range from technology to sustainable design; urbanism; landscape and ecology; and art, design, and the public domain. The focus of these is a form of anticipating areas that are relevant today but even more important in the future. Basically people spend about a year and a half to two years in the master in design studies program.

The doctoral programs are also in some ways different from the European model because we have two types of doctoral programs: a doctor of design and a Ph.D. The doctor of design is more instrumentally focused on issues with a direct relationship to design practice, whereas the Ph.D. resides within the framework of a humanities-based doctoral program.

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In addition to the programs of study, we also have a number of what, within the European context, would be something like institutes: for example, between the GSD and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government we have the Joint Center for Housing Studies that studies national and international trends in housing. A number of researchers there produce analysis and publications on the housing industry. We have a Loeb Fellowship program (endowed by John and Frances Loeb in 1970), which invites the best and brightest mid-career professionals to come and study at the GSD for a year. They are free to take classes all over Harvard and work with both students and professors—it is an exciting program. We also have executive education programs where people who are in practice, or people from other fields, come to the GSD for a few days or weeks to participate in a post-professional area of investigation and research into the real estate market, sustainability, new forms of practice, landscape, graphic design, and other issues with a bearing on contemporary design practice. We are currently enhancing and expanding our executive education program.

BBJ: *The GSD departments of Architecture and Landscape Architecture have been ranked number one in the United States for several years. What is the secret of GSD's leading role within architectural education in America?*

MM: I think that part of it is that we are very focused and deliberate about what we do, and we pay a lot of attention to the relationship between design education and the repercussions of that education on contemporary design practice. We want to be a school that is committed to experimentation and speculation in the field of design. At the same time, we believe strongly in the notion of know-how and being prepared. So for us, the relationship between preparation and specu-

lation is crucial. When it comes to the two departments that you mentioned, it also helps that we have two of the oldest departments offering graduate education in architecture and landscape architecture in the United States. We have been at it for a long time. We have a history that is linked with this idea of excellence and wanting to have both the best students and the best teachers here. The fact that we also operate within the context of one of the world's leading research universities gives us an edge, because it enable us to collaborate with other parts of the university, and I think that enhances the appeal.

The most important aspect though is the quality of our students and the interaction between faculty and students. We also believe in the value of being not simply an American school. We are very conscious of the fact that we are the leading example of an originally European school situated in the United States. And now we are really and truly a global school, a world school. I don't say that in the sense of the concept of globalization, but in the sense that we are sensitive to the nuances of what is going on around the world. We invite many international architects, landscape architects, urban designers, and urban planners to visit, and our students come from many countries. But we are also international in our approach. We have the combination of sensitivity and caring about what happens. We also choose international locations for many, if not most, of our projects.

Finally, I think that a focus on the notion of pedagogy as research makes teaching architecture itself a form of research. Our approach is not based on passing on knowledge that already exists. We believe strongly in the understanding and the value of what has been gained from the past, but also in how we are anticipating things that have not yet happened. Our work in the studios

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is much more focused on speculating on the future. This relationship between knowledge and experimentation is something that distinguishes us from other schools.

BBJ: *How do you think good education should be measured? Are there, in your opinion, any evident weaknesses in the current ranking systems?*

MM: It is very important for schools to have their singular identities. Sometimes one method or one criterion that applies to all schools generates certain problems. Of course you want to have some common ground, so that on one level it is not that different from studying medicine: you want people to have some shared understanding of the body and its functions. But you also hope that there could be different approaches or perspectives toward the field.

But the mindset, the approach, the point of focus is as important as the outcome—which is normally the way in which things are measured. In the context of good design education, we really should have peer reviews. We should have mechanisms of evaluation that put as much emphasis on design as they do on other areas like technology, history, theory, questions of communication and visualization, and the interface between these.

So again, I'm supportive of the idea of the relationship between history and architecture. You can also talk about the relationship between teaching and studio practice. Things exist at multiple levels: they are not being examined only through one framework. To answer the question more broadly: Really good education should be measured according to the kind of information that is conveyed, as well the kind of innovation that it makes possible. The role of the school has to be one of acknowledging what has been done, but also encouraging what is yet to come.

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certain issues connected with technology or sustainability, it seems at the moment that these are primarily being understood from a scientific perspective, which puts more emphasis on research, which is very important. But maybe there is not enough emphasis on the interrelation between that research and design—technology’s impact on design. These are the kinds of things that are exciting to look at. It would be interesting to have the ranking systems encourage innovation and experimentation. But generally they tend to do a good job.

BBJ: *Architectural educational institutions are obviously producing the future generations of practitioners, researchers, and educators within our professional fields. But looking at the larger picture, what kind of role do you believe the GSD and other educational institutions should play in society?*

MM: In the future, educating professionals and practitioners should continue to play a big part in what we do. But I think we will see a change in the role of professional education. Certainly what I envisage—at least in the American context—is that we will need to be true collaborators with other

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disciplines. The value of design, design education, and design thinking as a mode of practice has been underutilized. In the United States and in Canada, there is increasing discussion now around this theme of design thinking.

The Harvard Business School is famous for its so-called case study approach toward pedagogy. The Harvard Medical School is equally famous for its approach to the teaching of medicine. I think that people are realizing that the concept of studio practice—the way that we designers work in a collaborative fashion with multiple

agencies and many consultants, understanding a problem holistically; how we conceptualize; how we bring various elements together through the design of a system, through the design of a project—involves valuable modes of thinking, imagining, and speculating. An important part of design is this idea of imagining, which is going to be more critical in terms of how schools like the GSD remain relevant. For example, one of the new master in design studies areas addresses the relationship between art, design, and the concept of the public domain. We are establishing a collaboration with a European school—not a design school, but a school of political science and business, the Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris (known as “Sciences Po”). We are working with their vice president for research, sociologist of science Bruno Latour, who is interested in how people who have experience in business and marketing can come into a master’s program that uses design as a point of reference for graduate education. They are very interested in what the GSD is doing, and they will send some of their students to the GSD to engage in these questions. Other scholars in Canada and elsewhere are discussing this as well.

Last fall we hosted a novel program with the World Economic Forum—a symposium involving faculty from various parts of Harvard that used design thinking as a catalyst for research on environmental issues such as climate change and related topics. So the critical thing is that we have to continue to educate and do research in the areas of design and to produce or develop the best possible designers, the best possible practitioners.

But professional schools, historically, have been very hermetic. Therefore if we want to deal in innovation, we need the collaboration of others—such as engineers and scientists—the same way as

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happens in practice. We now need to do it at a more research-based level. We have research projects in collaboration with the school of engineering at the University and with Harvard’s Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering. We are looking at the question of apertures—of the science of openings. If you think about the way that apertures work with plants and animals, and what kind of flexibilities there are, it may give us other possibilities in terms of how openings in buildings can function in the future. People are thinking about the relationship between transparency and opacity in a different way.

These sorts of research-based collaborations can open up different possibilities for design schools such as the GSD, which I think is harder for the more traditional schools that have been established as only architecture schools. I see one of the greatest assets of the GSD as having architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, urban design, and different research programs that are connected to the University and then to practice. This is something that will be increasingly significant in the years to come. ●