

“My criteria is to make functional buildings”

WHAT WE CALL DESIGN CRITERIA IS A VERY SIMPLE THING, FIRST YOU NEED TO EXAMINE THE FUNCTIONS AND THEN YOU NEED TO EXAMINE THE ENVIRONMENT SURROUNDING THE PROJECT; A PROJECT CAN ONLY BEGIN TO UNRAVEL ONLY AFTER THESE ARE DONE. UNFORTUNATELY A LOT OF PROJECTS START WITH VISUAL DESIGN. WE DON'T PROVIDE ANY VISUALS ON OUR FIRST SHOWCASES; WE SHOW PROPER PLACING AND IDEAS INSTEAD. IN MY OPINION, WITHOUT FIRST MAKING A PROPER PROJECT, IT'S WRONG TO TALK ABOUT COLORS AND TEXTURES, MY CRITERIA IS TO MAKE FUNCTIONAL BUILDINGS, WHICH IS A SUBJECT MATTER OF SUSTAINABILITY.

**As Brigitte Webber Architects you are signing on to many different projects, from interior design to tall buildings... Can you talk a bit about your designs and your design criteria?**

I don't believe architecture has a concept of scales, so i choose not to scale projects as large or small. Every project has it's own qualities; so we choose i projects based on those qualities. I don't separate architecture from interior design, to me they're part of the same subject. If we're doing an architectural project, we want to do the interior design for it as well. Some architects don't want to do interior design and some interior designers say that they are not architects, i think that's a wrong approach; because it eventually connects at a mutual theme. It's not enough to just build a structure to understand how people live, the project needs to be watched closely to the last step, which includes interior design.

**So what are your design criteria?**

What we call design criteria is a very simple thing, first you need to examine the functions and then you need to examine the environment surrounding the project; a project can only begin to unravel only after these are done. Unfortunately a lot of projects start with visual design. We

don't provide any visuals on our first showcases; we show proper placing and ideas instead. In my opinion, without first making a proper project, it's wrong to talk about colors and textures, my criteria is to make functional buildings, which is a subject matter of sustainability. If a building is done right, it can be used for many years, but if it has a faulty function the employers or the next inhabitants might need to make changes. Unfortunately briefings in Turkey are very insufficient, we strongly request proper briefings and we don't begin projects without getting one; shortly we want to know exactly what the investor wants right from the beginning. But people try to avoid this because it's very hard to prepare a briefing. They get a land and ask us what can be done here, occupations get mixed in Turkey, and the architect is seen as responsible for everything, which is not right. I say this because i have job experiences overseas; they have experts on everything out there. We have a lot of consultants in here; but they are afraid to get too involved, also investors don't always listen to them. If briefings were an obligatory thing to make, i believe structures would be made with much more care and precision.

**What do you think are the sustainable and ecological parts of architecture?**

You must always avoid constructing anything unnecessary

BRIGITTE WEBER ARCHITECTS





THERE ARE DIFFERENT ERGONOMIC VIEWS ON SHOWERS AND BATHTUBS, BUT ESPECIALLY IN TURKEY, WE TRY TO USE FEWER TUBS AND MORE SHOWERS. RESEARCH DONE AROUND LARGE RESIDENCE PROJECTS STATE; IF A HOUSE HAS A SHOWER, THAT HOUSE USES MUCH LESS WATER THAN HOUSES WITH TUBS.

and move based on necessities, people will always have the need to settle and build, this is something in our nature but i think we should avoid it and try not to overdo it. If there's no need for residences or offices, why make them? We need to research what we need in the streets of the cities, in our country. First step for ecology is to not do if not needed. After that we need to focus on education, which is also lacking in Turkey, i hate to make another comparison but i believe that comparisons are needed to see what we lack, in Austria, we have ecology classes from kindergarten; they thought us things like how to separate trash and they made sure that we didn't litter and always aired classrooms with two facing windows open. Somethings need to be thought when we're kids because then it's very hard to teach a 50 or 60 year old investor.

Lately LEED and BREEAM are being used for advertising or for profit. They're introducing projects as applicants; an applicant didn't necessarily have a certificate, and i think there's a problem there, i think they're using false advertising. This should be closely examined and supervised at all times.

**Nowadays it's very easy to get environment friendly materials. How do you think they're received by the market and how are they being used in Turkey?**

I think i came to Turkey at a very hard time 20 years ago; there had been some progress but we didn't have as many materials. I came to Turkey with a completely different state of mind, but i needed to change my idea of design and architecture because the materials i needed to do the things i was used to don't exist here. Now we have everything, and if we don't we can still get it somehow, but i don't think that's where the problem is, problems with execution are still there. You could use the best insulation or the best thermopane; but unless you do it properly and maintain it, it's useless; you would just be losing money. That's why we always make definite decisions with the investors; we research if the material has any international certificates; because testing labs are also very scarce in Turkey. You need to know if a local material has any history, if it has been used in any buildings and if they were foreign

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projects or not. And there are a lot of workers to find; but they lack education, technical schools are lacking in Turkey, so the workers don't properly use the materials. As an example, it's not very easy to use adhesives, you need to first do some cleaning, then the stuff needs to keep being aired for a while for it to set. I haven't even seen someone properly apply silicone, so we need to look for the people who can apply them, like as if they're supposed to be rare.

**Can you talk about the pros and cons of gas concrete as an environment friendly material?**

Gas concrete has some pros indeed, firstly it's very light and as a light material we get fewer problems than we would with bricks. It has great heat insulation properties and if used as a finishing layer it provides great acoustics. I also really like the way it looks; we're trying to make lighter structures, so it's a very good material.

**During your speech at the „Thousand and One faces of Design“ event you said „one of our most valued staples are to deliver all the promises we make at the beginning of any project“ Can you talk about that a little bit more?**

Every architect needs to know about architecture, interior desing and landscaping. They should start from the very beginning of the land preparation process untill the last doorknob is installed. Architectural and interior design project phases, occupational control and material consent; that's why



we want to be in every aspect of the job. We don't want to make any of our previous mistakes in our following projects, so we get feedback from the end user, which is very important. I also think that's a good way of business for the investors as well. In short, we deliver all of our promises as a team, in respect for social sustainability.

Social sustainability is a very common subject in Europe as well. Nowadays architecture has come a long way that a building needs to look good to be accepted. In continuation of sustainable architecture, we need social sustainability so that the people who will live there in the next twenty years will make sure the building is well maintained. We need to maintain our living places without abandoning them, that's what we call social sustainability. If I feel like I belong somewhere, I should be fighting for that place.

**Do you feel like you belong in Istanbul?**

Definitely. I've almost spent twenty years of my life in here and now I say that I'm a "Austrian based Istanbulite"

**“Water Efficiency and Wet Areas“ are our focuses for this issue. What are the things you pay attention to when dealing with bathrooms and kitchens?**

There are different ergonomic views on showers and bathtubs, but especially in Turkey, we try to use fewer tubs and more showers. Research done around large residence projects state; if a house has a shower, that house uses much less water than houses with tubs. Faucet producers have developed many new techniques for bathroom faucets, they provide a system that, while keeping the water pressure



BRIGITTE WEBER

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the same, uses much less water. We must lessen our water consumption without any major setbacks to our comfort and we also need to be careful about where the water comes from, also where it'll go to next. It's very important to evaluate used water as grey water, people had many problems with water in Turkey and they still have a lot of problems. That's why they don't want to live somewhere in Istanbul that doesn't have a water storage.

Interior space quality is very important for a healthy sustainable life. What are your favorite materials to use on this matter? We want to use natural materials, of course; but how are they being made, where do they come from, and what processes do they go through? These are very important questions. You can't use a really hard to grow tree for flooring just because it's natural, you need to use materials made from supervised products.

We can find out about the information behind an imported product, but there's no such system in Turkey. Although it may be unsustainable but sometimes we'll have to get products that are not local, which does get a lot of criticism but you need to make compromises when talking about the people's health, and we can't accept a product that doesn't fulfill certain certificate qualities. Natural stone isn't always a useful material, it's a limited source and one day it'll run out. We should be very careful when using it in larger projects. Recyclable materials are preferred everywhere, but i believe there's a growing need for those here in Turkey, we need to start producing our own recyclable materials without copying Europe.

**Lastly, what do you think will the interior space trends of 2015 be?**

Designs change based on the functions of spaces. For example, bathrooms are getting

bigger and bigger, because the people come from a bathhouse culture, which is making a huge comeback. Even in smaller apartments the kitchens are getting bigger, because people are starting to cook together.

It's very hard to state material trends, every architect has different styles and criteria but I think natural patterns will always be in style. I don't think we'll be into shiny, artificial and high-tech materials for a long time, people are getting bored of flare, they now want more humble designs for their homes. People are living more and more comfortably every day, and instead of a glorious adobe they want a place to call home.

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