The idea of exhibiting architectural works of the past decade by practising firms filled a void that was verging towards becoming a vacuum. The vision of Yehya El Zeiny was executed at the Exhibition of Contemporary Egyptian Architecture in a commendably varied display. But if we work on the premise that the exhibition reflects the current state of Egyptian architectural practice then a critical question is it green or bleak? - has been elicited.

Green implies the built form is interacting with the surrounding environment in a positive manner. This includes not only the relevance of the building programme to the expectations of the user, but also how the building behaves within the local climate and to what extent the issue of energy conservation during its operation is taken seriously. Of course there are other issues I have not yet dared to incorporate into discussions of contemporary Egyptian practice - such as the recycling of building materials, the adoption of building processes that consume lower energy and the management of waste disposal that is least harmful to the terrain.

Bleak, in contrast to green, reflects an Egyptian architectural practice that is still entrenched in its mediocre understanding of what modern architecture means. "Form follows function" is a slogan that has haunted architecture schools for over five decades now. "Form" is interpreted as the outer shell that comes as a consequence of how spaces are arranged internally, as opposed to a design exercise that stands on its own. "Function" is viewed as the juggling of spaces according to a technical understanding of the building programme. Areas of spaces and their arrangement according to hierarchical order is the issue at hand. What is missing is the underlying meaning of the overall composition and the generation of a concept that consistently gives a special character to the building programme and hence pleasantly rewarding the owners and clients with higher revenues. What is left is an exercise in resolving a jigsaw puzzle in which spaces on the drawing board slide on top of each other to assemble a shallow picture of what modern architecture is all about.

Some architects have sought distinction in the market by reversing the slogan: "Function Follows Form". By this they start with a form, then try to cram inside it all the areas dictated by the building programme. In most cases the form becomes isolated from what is inside, each giving a message so different from one another. In other cases, the internal juggling of spaces doesn't satisfy the mechanical understanding of a functional plan. The final result is often "form follows nothing".

"Was the exhibition green or bleak?" is a difficult question to answer for the panels on display of various offices fall into both categories. One green project stands beside another bleak project, in a number of cases both represent a single office. Approaches sometimes appear to be used rather as a matter of style than mandate.

Above: Section in the Central Bank avoids the green house effect so common in the architecture of Egypt

Opposite: Student life in an environmentally conscious design
or philosophy. In this case quality or mediocrity in design becomes circumstantial. A shockingly depressing realisation when you come to observe that the bleak projects remain the shining glories of a number of offices.

There are few projects that fulfil the requirements of being labeled “green.” Among them are those of Mohamed Tawfiq Abdel Gawad. His student service centre at the Helwan University campus is a building that has a patio around which is located various amenity shops for the students. The design of the patio transcends the basic requirements of the building programme by having a large wooden pergola over its open space. In this way students can freely stroll around the shops in a comfortable environment without feeling the direct heat of the sun during the day. More important, the addition of open corridors ensures a bustling student life inside the building. For these corridors are partially shaded by the pergola and directly overlook the patio. Transparency of activity is obvious around this central open space where students can see one another and feel the sense of activity so much characteristic of their teenage lifestyle. To enhance this concept the balustrade is made of thin horizontal rods so that any activity behind them along the corridors can be noticed from the patio below and vice versa. The design in this way is not just a mere fulfilment of area requirements, it is not just the clustering of similar spaces together; it is not a mechanical interpretation of a functional plan. It is green for the building succeeded in fusing the lively spirit of students on campus with the local environment on a daily basis.

Gazali Keseba is another architect who believes in green architecture. In his Central Bank North Cairo Branch, he carried the idea further. It is enough to review the section of the bank to notice that the central atrium has vertical glass tubes acting as a light well and air outlet. In this way there is no green house effect, something so obvious but so rare in Egyptian practice. Large glass surfaces either on the roof or the walls need to have outlets so that hot air caused by thermal radiation of glass panels is not trapped inside the building but finds its way out. Architects believe that by sealing the building the air conditioned air is well preserved. But then they defy their logic by covering their building facades by large glazed curtain walls (usually untreated by adequate sun breakers) that work on heating the air more efficiently than the miserable cooling efforts of the central air conditioning system of the building. The building looks modern and suitable for a corporate image, but the owner keeps paying for high consumption of cooling energy for the rest of his life. Here form follows nothing!

Gazali Keseba in his design comes to rec-

Productivity in the Central Bank is promising to be much higher than that of a conventional bank.
I wish I could see more of this Central Bank project. I wish I could see this as part of the Egyptian building code. Or shall we wait until more clients become educated about the benefits of such an approach? In a conventional office space, one breathes the same recycled air for eight hours that is already saturated by carbon dioxide, cigarette smoke, bacteria and viruses of various categories, visually crammed in a single storey mostly lit by mechanical means. In the Central Bank office designed by Keseba the employee breathes continuous fresh air, gets in touch with garden areas, enjoys the loveliness of the central atrium, and is pleased to track the sun path approaching five o'clock through top natural lighting. How do you think the productivity of employees in both cases would compare? Shouldn't this count while marketing the office space for rent? Doesn't this mean more revenues for the owner of the building? The same comparison I would make for a kindergarten designed by the same architect. In his project, the children's classrooms surround a sunken curvilinear courtyard under ground level, with the entire roof surface covered by a stretch of lawn and deciduous shade trees. How do you think the mental germination of the child in this environment would compare to another sitting in a classroom of a typically exposed concrete structure and playing in a playground exposed to direct sun heat and glare? Wouldn't you like to place your child in Keseba's design?

To conclude, I have chosen, as examples, two architects from the exhibition to show what we need in the coming decades in Egypt. There are other equally visionary architects participating in the exhibition, however time and space do not allow me to write about them. What the exhibition has succeeded to do is to raise issues for the profession to consider. If we can see more of this exhibition practice can improve. Perhaps next time prize certificates can be awarded by a public organisation to those who have distinguished projects. This may inspire young generations of practitioners and students of architecture to develop their career from the start in a positive manner.
الركبة الإسقاطية (Green House Effect) تعرف بأنها "الانكسار الحراري" وتعني مستويات الكربون في الجو تصل إلى أقصى مستويات قدرة الانكسار الحراري. هذا يؤدي إلى ارتفاع درجات الحرارة في الأرض وتجفيفها. إن ارتفاع درجات الحرارة يؤدي إلى تساقط الرياح والجفاف، مما يؤدي إلى تقليل مستويات الماء في الأرض. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن ارتفاع درجات الحرارة يؤدي إلى انخفاض مستوى الماء في الأرض، مما يؤدي إلى انخفاض مستوى الماء في جنوب الجزء الغربي من العالم، مما يؤدي إلى انخفاض مستوى الماء في جنوب الجزء الشرقي من العالم. هذا يؤدي إلى انخفاض مستوى الماء في المحيطات وتفريغ الماء من الأرض، مما يؤدي إلى انخفاض مستوى الماء في المحيطات وتفريغ الماء من الأرض. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن انخفاض مستوى الماء في المحيطات يؤدي إلى انخفاض مستوى الماء في المحيطات وتفريغ الماء من الأرض، مما يؤدي إلى انخفاض مستوى الماء في المحيطات وتفريغ الماء من الأرض.
ملاحظة: الأعمال المعمارية للمعمرين المسرحين في العقود الماضية تُذكر كاثنيرة مثير للشفقة في حالة مؤلمة. وقد بدأت تلك الفترة الخاصة بكورية ليصبح رمزًا للجهل في هذا المعرض.

ويصف المصطلح "الممارسة الجسدية" بوضوح الحالة المعتادة للمعمرين، حيث يظهر هناك إحساسًا بالاحتكاء والتغليب والضغط. وكلما نزلت الأيام، كلما ازداد التوتر، كلما كان هناك انقسام في الطريق. ومع ذلك، ما زال هذا المعرض يفتح النار،抚ئًا للحالة المعتادة للمعمرين، جربًا للصبر، ملكًا للصبر.

ولذلك، يمكن القول أن نفس المصطلح "الممارسة الجسدية" يتكسّب من القدرة على التعبير عن الحالة المعتادة للمعمرين، حيث يظهر هناك إحساسًا بالاحتكاء والتغليب والضغط. وكلما نزلت الأيام، كلما ازداد التوتر، كلما كان هناك انقسام في الطريق. ومع ذلك، ما زال هذا المعرض يفتح النار،抚ئًا للحالة المعتادة للمعمرين، جربًا للصبر، ملكًا للصبر.

و على التوالي، مصطلح "الممارسة الجسدية" يبتكر في بعض الأحيان لجهل في هذا المعرض. ومع ذلك، ما زال هذا المعرض يفتح النار،抚ئًا للحالة المعتادة للمعمرين، جربًا للصبر، ملكًا للصبر.

و أي مدى، مصطلح "الممارسة الجسدية" يبتكر في بعض الأحيان لجهل في هذا المعرض. ومع ذلك، ما زال هذا المعرض يفتح النار،抚ئًا للحالة المعتادة للمعمرين، جربًا للصبر، ملكًا للصبر.

هناك بعض المصطلحات الساهمين للفكر في السوق المعماري يربع شارع مضاء، هو "الوظيفة" تتبع الشكل، وهذا يبدأ بتصميم الشكل.