

Different roles of architects— have your thoughts about ‘life after school’ changed/ developed? And how?

I had a conversation with Lukaš one night about his friend who runs his own residential house design firm. According to Lukaš, this friend of his creates only one design per commission. During the design process, he does not contact the client often, or maybe at all. Not being in contact with the client during the design process eliminates any bad ideas from being placed in the client's head, and most of the time the client only has tiny changes that they want to have made to the house at the end. It takes Lukaš's friend about one month per house, or some time period close to that. Maybe it was three months. His personally-set schedule sustains himself, and the money holds him over until the next commission comes along, or when he needs to work again. According to Lukaš, this practice allows him to stay true to his architectural desires, since he truly doesn't work for anybody else but himself. This practice also makes him free from pressures that come with working within a larger organization. Clients come to him because they have seen his work and want his design; he does not need to contort his work to please the client.

To me, Lukaš's friend sounded like he had a really nice job. A job like that, where I work for myself and do everything that I know how to do, seems very desirable... As long as I know to do the right type of design. That self-employed low-press type of architecture work is appealing to me also because it impacts communities, neighborhoods, or regions. This friend of Lukaš's isn't taking any foreign or distant jobs, nor is he taking any jobs that run much risk of not being constructed. Thus, each choice he makes is much more important. Each decision he makes in the design is real and concrete: it will be built that way. That leads into another reason I think this job would be my dream life after school: to operate a business like that, I must know everything. A complete knowledge of residential architecture is required to do efficient work in this job. It requires knowledge about form and design, finance, psychology, ecology, construction (thus rudimentary physics), and drafting/computer programs. It seems rare that everything we learn in our architectural education could be used in one future job. This one seems to offer that possibility.

Having a job which excites me mentally is of utmost importance. In this way, working a construction job is far preferable to having an office drafting job, which seems to be the usual receptacle of architecture school graduates. Office workers don't ever seem to do work that is rewarding or has immediate societal benefit. Skilled manual work is much more appealing to me. As written about by Matthew B. Crawford in his 2009 book *Shop Class as Soulcraft*, schools (at all levels) are increasingly preparing students to become knowledge workers instead of developing previously-traditional skills. Office work, or 'knowledge labor', as Crawford calls it, is minimally rewarding. Additionally, Crawford argues that manual skilled labor uses arguably the same if not more knowledge than "knowledge labor" itself. The abstract and minute nature of knowledge work in large architectural firms separates the worker from the product. That is something I do not want in my career after school. These architectural workers are separated from the actual building, both during the process and with the finished product. I don't want that in any job I hold. I want my life after school to involve pride in my work. I believe it would be very hard to experience pride or even satisfaction in my work while working in a cubicle.

Thus, I currently yearn for a job similar to the one Lukaš's friend has. When my "life after school" begins, I want to find myself close to being fit for a job like that. I believe I approached architecture partly because I value a career that operates in significant seasons. I do not want to be doing the same thing every day at my job for a long time. Because of this, common office work scares me. Unfortunately it seems like office work is the architecture school graduate's unavoidable future, and there is really not much I can do right now to influence my life after school. While I hope for a job similar to Lukaš's friend's, it is one that would be hard to immediately establish. A job like his takes a financial leap of faith, or at least working two jobs at once in the beginning. Perhaps it is a possibility in my future though. I hope it is. I plan to work and learn manual trades in the summers while not in school, in hopes of being somewhat wiser in my adult years.