

Visionary Architecture

What do we mean when we speak of Visionary Architecture? While exciting to look at in illustrations, most “visionary” architecture has been hollow, either left unbuilt - and for good reasons (Le Corbusier’s Plan Voisin, Christopher Wren’s City of London, Albert Speer’s Germania among others), or built and abandoned (Fatephur Sikri), or built and somehow empty (Brasilia). Architecture ideals can be exciting and infectious because of the personal force/charisma of particular characters, because certain drawings/visualizations are highly charged and attractive. Yet as humans we are hardly ideal, and we are not ideas. The buildings and cities we build that might look visionary (Venice, Manhattan skyline) have been shaped for the most part by pretty practical reasons. And, it’s here in practical, useful, everyday buildings, developments and cities that we can find the work of true visionaries, those who use design to raise standards for all of us. This kind of visionary design can be seen, experienced and created at any scale, from a door handle to a downtown block. It comes not from asserting an aesthetic/ideal, but from enriching what is there before our eyes.