

## WILLIAM J. R. CURTIS (2008)

**William J. R. Curtis**, historian, critic, writer, painter, photographer, was born in Birchington, Kent, England, on March 21, 1948 and resides in south west France. Educated at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London University (First Class Honours, 1970) and at Harvard University (PhD, 1975), he has taught the history of art, theories of design, and architecture at universities in Europe, USA, Australia, Asia and Latin America: among others, Harvard University; the University of California; the Architectural Association, London; the University of Sydney; UNAM, Mexico City; ETSAB, Barcelona; Helsinki Institute of Technology; the Accademia, Mendrisio, Switzerland; and the University of Cambridge.

Perhaps Curtis' best known books are: *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (Phaidon 1982; second ed. 1987; fully revised third ed. 1996), and *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms* (Phaidon 1986). These have been referred to as 'classics' and have been much translated, the former into Spanish, German, Japanese, French and Italian; the latter into Spanish, German and Japanese. Among Curtis's other books: *Le Corbusier/English Architecture 1930's* (Open University 1975); *Le Corbusier at Work* (Harvard 1978, ed. E.F. Sekler); *Balkrishna Doshi: an Architecture for India* (Mapin, Rizzoli 1989); *Denys Lasdun: Architecture, City, Landscape* (Phaidon, 1994). Curtis's most recent books include: *Abstractions in Space: Tadao Ando, Ellsworth Kelly, Richard Serra* (Pulitzer Foundation, St. Louis 2001); *Teodoro Gonzalez de Leon: Obra Completa/ Complete Works* (Arquine, Reverte, Mexico 2004), *Barcelona 1992-2004* (Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 2004) and *RCR Aranda, Pigem, Vilalta Arquitectes* (Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 2004).

Curtis has lectured extensively around the world and has served on several international juries and commissions (e.g. the Wolf Prize, 1991; Shanghai Pudong Committee, 1992; the Piranesi Prize, 2000; Museum of Human Evolution, Burgos, 2000; Premio Regional de Arquitectura, Canaries, 2004; Port Tanger-Med, Morocco 2005; Palais des Congrès, Nancy 2007; Equerre d'Argent 2007; Prix Midi-Pyrénées 2007; Gare Maritime Tanger-Med 2007). He has also held many honorary posts, for example: the Power Lectures, Australia, 1981; the Cordingley Lecture, University of Manchester, 1987; the Mies van der Rohe Lectures, I.I.T. Chicago, 1987; the Banister Fletcher Lectures, London, 1988; the George Simpson Visiting Professorship, University of Edinburgh, 1990, 1991; Inaugural Lecture, ETSAM, Madrid 1990; Alvar Aalto Symposium, 1991; the Berthold Lubetkin Memorial Lecture, 1995; Cycle de conférences, Société française des architectes (SAFA), Paris, 1995; Univ. International Menendez Pelayo, Santander, 1995; Archiprix, Utrecht 1997; the Annual Sir John Soane Lecture, London, 1997; Le Corbusier, International, UNESCO, Paris 1997; Celebrating Chandigarh, 1999; East Wind, Tokyo, 2000; Alvar Aalto Academy, Helsinki, 2002; Madrid 2012 Olympics, 2003; Utzon Symposium, Aalborg, 2003; Slade Professorship in Fine Arts, University of Cambridge, 2003-4; Inaugural Lecture, Milan Polytechnic, 2006; DOCOMOMO, London, 2006-7; Circulo de Bellas Artes, 2007; COAC, Barcelona 2007; Cycle de conférences: une perspective critique sur l'architecture contemporaine, SAFA, Paris, 2007.

Curtis has received numerous prizes , for example: the Founder's Award of the Society of Architectural Historians, USA, 1982; the Alice Davis Hitchcock Medal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, 1984; both the Book Award and the Critic's Award of the Comité international des critiques d'architecture, 1985; a Silver Medal at the World Architectural Biennale, 1989; a Historical Monograph Award from the American Institute of Architects, 1997; a National Honors Society Gold Medal in Architecture and Allied Arts (USA), 1999; Commemoration Medal of Foundation of Museum of Finnish Architecture on occasion of Museum's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 2006.

Curtis is currently engaged in critical debates in the 'third' world as well as the 'first' and his writings on contemporary architecture have appeared in numerous international journals. These include in-depth articles and interviews in numbers of *El Croquis* (Madrid) published as monographs on (among others) Alvaro Siza, Rafael Moneo, Tadao Ando, Miralles and Pinos, Herzog & De Meuron, Juan Navarro Baldeweg, the younger generation in Spain etc. He has also written historical, critical and theoretical texts on subjects as varied as modern architecture, landscape design, the history of everyday objects, the process of design, historiography, visual education, criticism, Indian architecture, sub-Saharan vernacular architecture, Australian Aboriginal spear-throwers, photography, and the abstraction of nature in painting. In addition to more than a dozen monographs, Curtis has written introductions to several major exhibition catalogues (e.g. *Le Corbusier: Architect of the Century*, London, 1987; *Finland Builds*, Helsinki, 1992; *Bienal de arquitectura Espanola*, Madrid (1995, 1997); *Alvar Aalto in Seven Buildings*, Helsinki, 1998; *The Pritzker Architecture Prize, the First Twenty Years*, Chicago, 1999).

As well as writing books and critical essays, Curtis exhibits and publishes his paintings, drawings, reliefs and photographs. An exhibition of his work entitled 'Mielen Maisemia/ Mental Landscapes' was shown at the Museum of Finnish Architecture, Helsinki in 2000 accompanied by the book *Mental Landscapes* (Alvar Aalto Academy, 2000); another selection, entitled 'Mental Landscapes/ Paisajes Mentales' was shown at the Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid in 2002 accompanied by the book *Mental Landscapes/ Paisajes Mentales William J.R. Curtis*, (Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid, 2002); a further version was exhibited at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University in 2004, with a brief catalogue. An exhibition of Curtis's architectural photographs, "Architectures du Monde .Le regard de William J.R. Curtis", took place at the Centre Méridional de l'Architecture et de la Ville in Toulouse in 2004-5

<http://cmav.free.fr> (Programme/Archives) and at the Forum d'Urbanisme et d'Architecture in Nice, summer 2005. A further exhibition "Structures of Light", with accompanying catalogue of the same title took place at the Alvar Aalto Museum, Jyväskylä, October-November 2007  
[http://www.alvaraalto.fi/info/press/07eng\\_studio-curtis.htm](http://www.alvaraalto.fi/info/press/07eng_studio-curtis.htm)

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