

Clients v/s Architects

Modern Architecture

By Lincoln Stoller

Throughout history palaces were built for kings and temples for gods. This changed with the dawn of Modern Architecture in the 20th century. For the first time, architecture was a personal art, and the architect was the artist.

In architecture now, status symbols are designed by famous architects. For these architects, these are monuments to their own great art and price is of no object. Why should it be?

The result was unprecedented designs at extravagant prices. Function was unpredictable and, sometimes, missing entirely. Some of the most famously houses functioned so badly they couldn't be lived in. I explore the strange personalities behind this convoluted history in my book *From The Eye of the Beholder*, which is an extension of the game.

This strange mix of conflict and alliance reminds me of medieval religious battles. On one side are the architects defending their divine, artistic calling. On the other side are the clients who, like peasants, looked for comfort, stability, and progress. Did the clients get what they paid for? Those structures that have not been bulldozed for their lack of function, have been turned into monuments with their crazy history forgotten.

You won't hear of these battles in books on architecture or the history of design, but my father was the photographer of these projects and knew the architects personally. My access to his notes and conversations revealed the petty attitudes, gamesmanship, and court intrigue.

Games as Drama

Clients v/s Architects represents the play between practical clients and idealistic architects. The clients want a practical product. The architects, with their greater vision, see this as immature and smallminded.

In *Clients v/s Architects*, each player represents both an architect and their client. Each architect works to secure the greatest amount of funds for their client while, at the same time, gaining all of their client's funds for themselves.

In the game, this is done by navigating different mazes while playing cards whose combinations open and close various actions, paths, and areas within these mazes.

My book, *From The Eye of the Beholder*, shows masterpieces of Modern Architecture through my father's photographs. He was credited with making the architects' famous by turning their building into monuments.

Clients v/s Architects reflects a real conflict we rarely see. A dynamic where sponsors and artist play with each other while praying on each other.

All products showcase what's good and hide what's bad. Marketing is so pervasive that we can no longer tell true from false. Do you even present yourself authentically; are you ever sure!

In this game, you cannot tell who you're playing with or against. Your client and architect are in partnership, but it's your architect's advantage that wins the game. You don't play against the other players directly, but your actions will effect all other players for better or worse.

Games as History

Architects don't compete with each other directly, but change the landscape to the advantage of each, and sometimes to the disadvantage of others.

Knowing their personal lives, you'll see in addition to being vanguards and artists, they were petty and childish. People with strange characters lead strange lives. Many were not leaders but actors. Their skill inflated their egos and architecture was their vehicle.

Clients v/s Architects presents puzzles to bring out analytical skills, and competition to bring out your ego. In the game this is cartoonishly; in the book it's historical.

I'm not a board game manufacturer, I'm not aiming for a profit, and I definitely don't want to attract counterfeits! I'll produce a signed, limited edition set of 150 games that I'll assemble myself from printed, handpicked, and handmade components. If people want more games, maybe a game manufacturer will mass produce a retail version. It won't be me!

The book is simpler and almost as expensive to produce as the game. The Print-on-Demand paperback I'm offering doesn't contain high quality reproductions, and doesn't do justice to my father's iconic photographs. High quality requires offset printing of at least 1,000 copies. So while the book is incidental to the game, it's historically important, and its printing costs are half the whole campaign.

I hope you'll be interested in both: the fun of the game, and the wonder of the history. Everything is a game, but some games are more important than others!

— **Lincoln Stoller, December 2024**