

Architects Creating Hodge-Podge

THE UNIVERSITY of Oklahoma deserves commendation for rejecting the bizarre design for the OU Library expansion.

If some others in the past had done likewise, the campus would not be the architectural hodge-podge it has become.

As a form of art, architecture is not a private matter. Whatever shape it might take, a building is apt to stand before the public for a long time. It ought to be useful and beautiful.

Modern architects have criticized "gingerbread" trimmings used in past eras of construction. Sometimes gingerbread was over-used but when well-done, the result was a joy to behold. Exterior ornamentation in good taste might well be added to bare buildings now.

Modern architecture offers much to be criticized, especially rectangular towers constructed of reflective materials that make them resemble giant filing cabinets for people.

The barren plainness of the unidentified Myriad convention center adds neatness but little beauty to downtown Oklahoma City.

Sheraton Century Center Hotel looks nice from the front, although the "silo" motor drives seem a bit remote from the "feed mill" theater.

The National Cowboy Hall of Fame stands on a hilltop tract so people can see it. Yet many of its interesting exhibits are in a basement, accessible only by a steep, narrow stairway.

Certainly, there are some beautiful buildings here, too, such as Kerr-McGee Tower, Fidelity Bank and the Skirvin Plaza hotel, which is being restored by new Oklahoma owners to its former grandeur.

Churches often assume the appearance of architectural patchwork, as succeeding ministers leave imprints of their personal preferences. These range from traditional to extremely modern and one may wonder if they reflect spiritual attitudes of the congregations.

Texas Stadium has a big hole in

the roof, causing the sun to cast weird shadows to annoy spectators and give TV cameramen fits.

U.S. News & World Reports says many architects are turning against sleek skyscrapers of concrete and glass, referred to as "bland, sterile buildings devoid of warmth and compassion."

Probably the worst architectural fad of recent years broke out in Houston when new buildings were designed to look like they were falling down. Most cities already had an abundance of dilapidated buildings and, fortunately, this fad hasn't caught on.

Architects should be creative and innovative, but too often it seems they are intent upon producing something "different," rather than a structure that is efficient, economical and handsome.

We do not want or need a federal or any other kind of bureau to regulate architecture, but is it too much to ask that those responsible for designs give more attention to beauty and less to novelty?