

Brutalism

Architecture

What the word meant, what it argued for, and what it means now.

The original claim

- Beton brut — concrete left as struck
- Materials shown as they are
- Structure and services made legible
- An ethic, per Banham, not a style
- Civic and social building programmes

Popular use today

- Any large concrete building
- Judged on appearance alone
- Treated as hostile by default
- Detached from its social programme
- Now also a collecting taste

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Reyner Banham argued in 1955 that it was an ethic of honesty; the label has since become a look.

Unite d'Habitation, Marseille, 1952; Hunstanton School, the Smithsons, 1954; National Theatre, London, Lasdun, 1976.