Constructive truths?

The idea of truth is a question that has fascinated me for a long time, as I like to manipulate ideas before manipulating forms. The hypothesis of a constructive truth makes it possible to create a sort of continuous chain between initial data and a final result, rather like a mathematical proof. My scientific background means I am predisposed to feeling at ease with anything that resembles logical construction, and indeed I very much like Mies van der Rohe's definition of architecture as "the real battleground of the spirit". Nevertheless, if we cast even the most trivial of detached gazes over the field of architecture, we of course see that there are a number of truths, even if we only consider the work of Mies and the liberties he took with the expression of columns and beams in his façades – the very illustration of a constructive principle without actually being the constructive principle itself. Today, technology and techniques are all-powerful and therefore fundamentally ambiguous: we can now produce concrete as fine as steel, steel that looks like wood, and so on. It is no longer possible to find legitimacy in an architectural choice in terms of the techniques it employs alone. As technology has improved and techniques become more sophisticated, the waters have been muddied, enabling all kinds of trick and ruses, disguises, "lies", etc. While technology was at one time an ideology substituted for architecture and made it possible to establish a "moral code" of sorts, this period is now over. Today, laser-cutting techniques employed by computer-controlled robots are used to shape a steel plate into the form of a flower with various entwined decorations as easily, and almost as quickly, as a simple rectangle… On this point, Jean Prouvé and certain masters of the Modern Movement founded an ideology and an aesthetic based not on technology but on the *limits* of the technology of their age.

Does this mean that we must declare that everything is possible, and that everything is equally valid? In my view, no. There is a truth, which is not absolute, but rather a truth between the finished project and the initial idea that one had of this project. It seems obvious that every author of a piece of architecture must ensure that its realization is true with regard to the hypotheses based, for their part, on his or her version of the world.

A comparison can be drawn between authors of architecture and authors of novels, who must establish their own rules in order to make their characters and settings believable; their writing must be consistent with the universe that they seek to describe or which

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they previously imagined… and I think that this relative notion of
truth can also be found in architecture.

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