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This *EAP* starts 24 years. We thank readers renewing subscriptions and include a reminder for “delinquents.” We are grateful to subscribers who contributed more than the base subscription. Thank you!

This issue includes two book reviews and two essays. *EAP* Editor **David Seamon** discusses architect **Christopher Alexander’s** recent *Battle for the Life and Beauty of the Earth*, which tells the story of designing and building the 36-building, 10-million-dollar Eishin campus in suburban Tokyo. Philosopher **Ingrid Leman Stefanovic** reviews *The Language of School Design*, a primer using Alexander’s “pattern language” to think through the lived relationship between architecture and learning.

One aim of *EAP* is to present student research and writing, and this issue includes essays by Philosophy doctoral student **Matthew Bower** and Architecture masters student **Thomas Owen**. Bower considers traditional bathhouses and bathhouse rituals as they relate to sociability and “the porosity of flesh.” Owen contributes to a continuing *EAP* discussion on “architectural phenomenology” (see the fall 2012 issue) by considering how design might

move beyond visual images and contribute to a more multivalent environmental experience.

Space Syntax & Julienne Hanson

The fall 2012 issue of the on-line, open-access *Journal of Space Syntax* (vol. 3, no. 1) is devoted to the research and writings of recently-retired architect **Julienne Hanson**, the co-creator, along with architectural theorist **Bill Hillier**, of space syntax, a theory that examines relationships among human movement, social structure, and spatial configuration (the journal contents are available at: www.journalofspacesyntax.org/). This special issue reprints some of Hanson’s key works and provides commentaries. Contributors include: **Sophia Psarra** (“Spatial Morphology, Urban History and Design in Julienne Hanson’s ‘Urban Transformation: A History of Design Ideas’”); **Lars Marcus** (“Balancing Quantitative Analysis and Social Concern”); **Sam Griffiths** (“Networks, Narratives and Literary Representation: Reflections on Julienne Hanson’s ‘Time and Space in Two Nineteenth Century Novels’”); and **David Seamon** (“‘A Jumping, Joyous

Urban Jumble’: Jane Jacobs’ *Death and Life of Great American Cities* as a Phenomenology of Urban Place”).



Left: Alexander’s 1990 Eishin campus, a 2000-student college-high school. The large building, left, is the Great Hall, next to which, right, is the Public Yard and the campus lake, foreground. In the rear center is the Main Gate; to the right is the Homebase Street, along which are high-school classrooms. Photograph by Hajo Neis. Source: *ArchitectureWeek.com*. See review, p. 5.

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Items of Interest

The ninth annual conference of the **International Association for the Study of Environment, Space and Place** will be held April 27–29, 2013, at the University of Florida. The conference theme is “Mediated Spaces.” For more information, contact Prof. Charlie Hailey at: CLHAILEY@ufl.edu.

The annual conference of the **International Coalition of North American Phenomenologists** will be held May 24–26, 2013, at Ramapo College in Mahwah, New Jersey. All papers dealing with phenomenology in single disciplines and interdisciplinary contexts are welcome, and of special interest are those relating to the theme of embodiment. jmartinez@asu.edu.

Sponsored by the Harvard Divinity School and the Forum for Architecture, Culture and Spirituality, the **International Symposium on Urbanism, Spirituality and Well Being** will be held June 6–9, 2013, at Glastonbury Abbey, in Hingham, Massachusetts, USA. The focus is “leading-edge global culture and urbanism issues from contemplative, spiritual, philosophical, design and ethical perspectives.” For information regarding submission of paper proposals, symposium location, cost, format, and themes, go to: http://www.acsforum.org/usw_symposium/.

The Substance of Sacred Place is a conference to be held in Florence, Italy, June 20–21, 2013. Presentations will focus on the “material and tactile dimensions of locative sacrality across religious traditions. How is a sense of place communicable through physical means? What can a consideration of matter tell us about the often fraught relationship between the tangible world and its representation? We seek analyses of all materials evocative of a particular sacred milieu, not only earth, dust, stone, but also wood, metal, pigments, soil, or water. Presentations exploring either the substances and places themselves or textual and iconic depictions thereof are equally welcome.” Contacts: Laura Veneskey (lv2308@columbia.edu); Annette Hoffmann (hoffmann@khi.fi.it).

Environmental Humanities is an international, open-access journal aiming to invigorate current interdisciplinary research on the environment: “In response to a growing interest around the world in the many questions that arise in this era of rapid environmental and social change, the journal will publish outstanding scholarship that draws the humanities into conversation with the natural and social sciences.” <http://environmentalhumanities.org/>.

The **International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being** is a peer-reviewed open-access journal “for studies using rigorous qualitative methodology” relating to studies of human health and health care. www.IJQHW.net.

Published by the University of Houston, the **International Journal of Interior Architecture + Spatial Design**, or *ii*, is a bi-annual peer-reviewed scholarly journal that emphasizes advanced interior environmental research, teaching, design, emerging technologies, and digital fabrication. *ii* publishes peer-reviewed essays and visual presentations that integrate “research-based rigor with an avant-garde journalistic edge.” iieditors@gmail.com.

Ecopsychology is a peer-reviewed journal examining “the psychological, spiritual, and therapeutic aspects of human-nature relationships, concern about environmental issues, and responsibility for protecting natural places and other species. The journal places psychology and mental health disci-

plines in an ecological context and recognizes the links between human health, culture, and the health of the planet. The journal publishes theoretical papers, original and applied research, essays, case studies, examples of therapeutic practice, and book and media reviews.” www.liebertpub.com/eco.

Arizona State University’s College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (CALA) has launched the **Institute for Place and Well-Being**, directed by Dr. Esther Sternberg, known for her research on mind-body interactions. The institute will bring together the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, medicine, neuroscience, psychology, nutrition, and biomedical engineering. In association with the institute, CALA is developing a graduate program around place, well-being, and healthy communities.

Citations Received

Arnold Berleant, 2012. *Aesthetics beyond the Arts: New and Recent Essays*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Contending that aesthetics is a study grounded in perception, this philosopher reassesses “the place of beauty in the modern environment” and reconsiders Kant and Dewey’s contributions to aesthetic theory. Berleant explores “the kinds of meanings and larger understanding that aesthetic engagement with the human environment can offer.” One focus is what the author calls “social aesthetics,” which is said to enhance “human-environmental integration and sociality.”

Sidney Brower, 2011. *Neighbors & Neighborhoods: Elements of Successful Community Design*. Washington, DC: APA Planners Press.

This planner and architect “shares the lessons of planned communities from historic Riverside, Illinois, to archetypal Levittown, New York, and Disney’s Celebration, Florida.” He examines “how a neighborhood’s design lays the groundwork for the social relationships that make it a community.”

Henri Bortoft, 2012. *Taking Appearance Seriously: The Dynamic Way of Seeing in Goethe and European Thought*. Edinburgh: Floris Books.

The aim of this scientist and philosopher is to help readers see and understand the world and human experience in a more integrated, compelling way. Bortoft explores the confounding

relationship between parts and whole: that to understand the whole, one must understand the parts, but to understand the parts, one must understand the whole. Drawing on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and Goethean science, Bortoft argues that the key to circumventing the parts-whole paradox is a shift in attention from what is experienced to *the experience of* what is experienced. In a writing style that is both accessible and penetrating, Bortoft explains how we can ‘step back’ from what is seen into *the seeing of* what is seen. In this way, the whole comes to presence within its parts, which are the place for the presencing of the whole. In other words, the parts show the way to the whole, which can be encountered nowhere else except through the parts. By teaching ourselves to become more sensitive to this dynamic reciprocity between parts and whole, we learn to ‘take appearances seriously’. An admirable complement to his influential *The Wholeness of Nature* (1996). See sidebar, below.

Bortoft’s introducing phenomenology

Getting into phenomenology isn’t easy. It is a philosophy that has the effect of seeming strange and yet familiar at the same time. Phenomenology seems to take the ground away from under our feet, while at the same time giving us the sense of being where we have always been—only now recognizing it as if for the first time. It’s hard to catch hold of because it’s like trying to catch something as it’s happening and which is over before we can do so.

It can perhaps be described most simply as ‘stepping back’ into where we are already. This means shifting the focus of attention *within experience* away from what is experienced into the experiencing of it. So if we consider seeing, for example, this means that we have to ‘step back’ from *what* is seen into the *seeing of* what is seen (p. 17).

Thomas F. Cloonan & Christian Thiboutot, eds., 2010. *The Redirection of Psychology: Essays in Honor of Amedeo Giorgi*. Montreal: Interdisciplinary Circle of Phenomenological Research (CIRP), Univ. of Montreal.

The 17 chapters of this volume are all by psychologists who, in various capacities, have worked with phenomenological psychologist **Amedeo Giorgi**, Chair for some 25 years of Duquesne University’s Psychology Department, well known for its publications presenting scientific and interpretive approaches to a phenomenology of human experience and meaning. Contributors include **Christopher Aanstoos, Marc Applebaum, Steen Halling, Bernd Jager, Bertha Mook, James**

Morley, and Frederick Wertz. The sidebar, below, reproduces passages from Morley's perceptive chapter, "It's always about the *Epoché*."

"It's always about the epoché..."

The *epoché* and all the various forms of the [phenomenological] reduction entail a type of disposition or attitude, a value system.... It is a commitment to assume the position of perpetual beginner and a childlike yet disciplined openness to the world as an ongoing birth of meaning. It is a stance of wonder, astonishment, and what is essentially a *trust* in the truth of the world to reveal itself on its own terms—not the terms of the mundane ego of the natural attitude [the unquestioned acceptance of the lifeworld and of life's taken-for-grantedness] (James Morley, p. 303).

[I]t is an essential feature of the natural attitude itself to put in abeyance any contradiction to the naïve realism of the everyday assumptions of ordinary life. Phenomena anomalous to the assumptions of the natural attitude are put aside. It tellingly exhibits intolerance to the strange, the weird, or the uncanny, as much as it suspends the reality of personal death, or sexuality, or even certain social phenomena such as the pervasive economic injustice that surrounds us.

Furthermore,... the *epoché* of the natural attitude sustains multiple worlds, or "finite provinces of meaning" each one distinguished from one another through a sort of amnesiac barrier that is the natural attitude. Like soap bubbles, each region of meaning is self-contained until contact with another region pops one bubble into another. There is the world of aggressive office politics that bursts when one enters a place of religious worship, a world of fantasy or daydreaming that ceases when I am forced to attend to the car I am driving... [[P]assage from each province to another is experienced, like any *epoché*, as a psychic jolt or "shock"....

But distinctions must be made. The mundane *epoché* is an unfocused unreflective *epoché* that constrains experience and drives our awareness within the limitations of the natural attitude. In contrast, the phenomenological *epoché* is focused, self-reflective, and disciplined; it offers options and possibilities for our understanding of the world in a manner best described as liberating

Nonetheless, this insight into the other aspect of the *epoché* could not only contribute to much empirical phenomenological research and open new avenues for methodology, but it could also support new pedagogical approaches to instructing students in the practice of *epoché* (James Morley, pp. 301–02).

Norm Friesen, Carina Henriksson, & Tone Saevi, eds., 2012. *Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Education: Method and Practice*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

As these educators define it, hermeneutic phenomenology emphasizes the interpretive dimension of phenomenological understanding. This approach is "particularly open to literary and poetic qualities of language, and encourages aesthetically sensitized writing as both a *process* and *product* of research." The eleven chapters in this collection aim to "give voice to everyday aspects of educational practice—particularly emotional, embodied and empathic moments—that may be all too easily overlooked in other research approaches." Nine of the chapters originally appeared in the peer-reviewed, on-line journal, *Phenomenology & Practice*; contributors include **Linda Finlay** ("Debating Phenomenological Research Methods"); **Anna Kirova** and **Michael Emme** ("Immigrant Children's Bodily Engagement in Accessing Their Lived Experiences of Immigration"); and **Andrew Foran** and **Margaret Olson** ("Seeking Pedagogical Places"). See the sidebar, below, for the opening paragraph of Henriksson and Friesen's "Introduction" to the volume.

Hermeneutic phenomenology

Understanding hermeneutic phenomenology as a research method requires the definition and discussion of terms that may initially appear daunting—beginning with the phrase "hermeneutic phenomenology" itself. *Phenomenology* is the study of experience, particularly as it is lived and as it is structured through consciousness. "Experience" in this context refers not so much to accumulated evidence or knowledge as something that we "undergo." It is something that happens *to* us, and not something accumulated and mastered *by* us. Phenomenology asks that we be open to experience in this sense.

Hermeneutics... is the art and science of interpretation and thus also of meaning. Meaning in this context is not a thing that is final and stable, but something that is continuously open to new insight and interpretation. Hermeneutic phenomenology is consequently the study of *experience* together with its *meanings*. Like hermeneutics, this type of phenomenology is open to revision and reinterpretation: it is about an openness to meaning and to possible experiences. Hermeneutic phenomenology, in short, is as much a disposition and attitude as it is a distinct method or program for inquiry (p. 1).

Book Review

Christopher Alexander's "Battle for the Life and Beauty of the Earth"

Christopher Alexander, 2012. *The Battle for the Life and Beauty of the Earth: A Struggle between Two World-Systems*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reviewed by David Seamon

Christopher Alexander's latest book is subtitled "A struggle between two world-systems," and it is largely the theme of *conflict*, both conceptual and real-world, that this eminent American architect and architectural theorist uses to organize the story of his designing and fabricating the 36-building, 10-million-dollar Eishin School, a 2000-student combination high school and college in suburban Tokyo, Japan, begun in 1981 and largely completed by 1990 (seven buildings remain to be constructed).

Narrative was a major presentation format that Alexander used in his 1985 *Production of Houses*, which told the story of how five Mexicali lower-middle-class families designed and built their own homes, guided by Alexander and his construction team. In *Battle*, the story format moves to center stage and unfolds through an escalating series of events that include lawsuits, under-the-table pay-offs, conspiracies and betrayals by colleagues, verbal threats of families and friends of Eishin faculty, and a physical beating of the principal Eishin client by thugs hired by opponents of the project.

To conceptualize the Eishin story, Alexander identifies two contrasting approaches to design and construction—what he labels "System A" and "System B." Throughout his professional career, Alexander has sought to actualize System A—a way to fabricate buildings and places that evoke exuberance, comfort, joy, and a sense of life. System A is "concerned with the well being of the world—its land, ecosystems, and people" (p. 49). This way of envisioning and making emphasizes quality, subtlety, finesse, and adaptive structures

grounded in place and locality. The aim is creating "beauty, healing, and wholeness" for both material environments and human worlds (*ibid.*). As Alexander explains,

In *any* environment we build—building, room, garden, neighborhood—always, what matters most of all is that each part of this environment intensifies life. We mean that it intensifies human life, animal life, emotional life, the life of storms, the life of wild grasses and lilies, the life of fish in a stream, the life of human kindness in a rough place where it may not be easy to find (p. 115).

Working to undermine Alexander's hopeful System A is cynical "System B," the villain of the Eishin story and only concerned with money, power, control, and rapidity of production. Said by Alexander to dominate the design and construction professions today, System B emphasizes "size, speed, profit, efficiency, and numerical productivity" (p. 59). The environmental and architectural result is edginess, ugliness, and fragmentation. Alexander writes that because of System B:

... the architecture of the last 70 years has often been stark, homogeneous, boring to a degree that is almost frightening, very often entirely without delight and—most important—absurdly lacking the functional co-adaptation between parts that would mark it as living (p. 25).

For the Eishin School project, Alexander's actualizing the design approach of System A required an intensive long-term involvement of school faculty, administrators, students, construction workers, and Alexander's design team, members of which included architects Hajo Neis, Ingrid Fiksdahl-King, and Artemis Anninou; and structural engineer Gary Black. In contrasting his System-A approach

with conventional System B, Alexander explains that the entire design and fabrication process for the Eishin School was:

explicitly guided by the feelings of the faculty and students. It was guided by close adherence to the emotional character and feeling of the land, in every detail. It was explicitly oriented toward craft and construction which aimed at loving details that give joy to ordinary people. It aims at the idea of supporting and healing the wholeness of people, animals, and plants that live there. It depends on temporary field workshops at the site, so that craft and the making of special-purpose building elements are produced to support local wholeness, setting the context for each piece of building work, thus allowing it to become beautiful (p. 58).

In laying out the Eishin School story as it encapsulates the struggle between Systems A and B, Alexander breaks *Battle* into 25 chapters organized in four parts. Part One, “Solving the Problem of Architecture in Our Time” (chaps. 1–6), uses architectural examples from the completed Eishin campus as a means to illustrate practical, conceptual, and ethical concerns—“The Crucial Importance of Local Adaptation” (chap. 2); “System-A & System-B: A Necessary Confrontation” (chap. 3); “Inner Aspects of the Two Production Systems” (chap. 4); “The Wasteland of Our Hearts” (chap. 5); and “The Wholeness of the Whole” (chap. 6).

Part Two, “Rumblings of a Coming Battle” (chaps. 7–12), describes the programming for the campus, beginning with the dream of the school’s progressive principal Hisae Hosoi, who Alexander describes as “a man who wanted to change Japanese society’s view of education, and as someone who knew ahead of time that the buildings that would be built had to have new qualities” (p. 99). Part Two includes a chapter on a site-design process that used six-foot-high flags to lay out the 36 buildings on the 23-acre site; and another chapter detailing the process of designing specific school structures, including entry gates, high-school and college buildings, library, judo hall, and gymnasium (the last said to be “one of the largest all-wood buildings in Japan, or indeed, anywhere in the world” [p. 254]).

The most prominent chapter in Part Two is the complete Eishin pattern language (see sidebar, next p.), composed of 110 patterns arranged from largest to smaller scale, beginning with “global character of the campus” (5 patterns) and “Inner Precinct” (14

patterns), then moving through “buildings of the Inner Precinct” (12 patterns) to smaller-scaled patterns like “special outdoor details” (8 patterns) and “interior building character” (9 patterns). Alexander claims that this pattern language arose largely from discussions among Eishin administrators, teachers, and students. He writes that:

Even before we have any idea about the physical configuration of the buildings, their shape, or design, or the way these [elements] are made real in space, it is already obvious that the school is given its life to an enormous degree merely by this list of patterns (p. 151).

Part Three, “Pitched Battle” (chaps. 13–19), depicts the practical struggle between Systems A and B, once Alexander’s California firm, in cooperation with the Eishin administration, actually begins campus construction. At this point, situations and events become nasty and, at times, unbelievable (for instance, Alexander’s arm wrestling the burly construction foreman representing the big Japanese construction company Fujita Kogyo, procured in a trying series of encounters to do campus construction). Eventually, the project moves forward, and Alexander ends the book with a chapter, “Appearance of a Genuine and Living Atmosphere,” that draws on letters, film documentaries, and other testimonial evidence to claim, using an accolade from the 2009 architectural journal *Nikkei Architecture*, that the campus is a “great work” (p. 378).

In the last part of the book, Alexander moves discussion to the broader theoretical themes more thoroughly discussed in his four-volume master work, *The Nature of Order* (2002–2005). He reviews his 15 geometric qualities of wholeness, giving particular attention to the concept of *center*—any sort of spatial concentration or organized focus or place of more intense pattern or activity. He then reviews the nature of “wholeness-extending transformations” and concludes with a photographic essay that is said to portray “the beauty of daily life” at the Eishin campus where he claims that “simple beauty and wholeness in the environment heals, supports, and engages life” (p. 453).

In evaluating *Battle*, one might argue that its most valuable section is the Eishin pattern language, which demonstrates perhaps the most

comprehensive design programming that Alexander has provided in his many published works. Also valuable is his description of the cooperative laying out of the site through intensive, firsthand “being with” the natural landscape. Most significant architecturally is a largely completed campus that does appear to evoke an environmental ambience that would contribute mightily to the kind of progressive educational experience aimed for by Eishin Principal Hosei. There are also several campus buildings, including the gymnasium and Great Hall, which look to evoke an understated elegance and subtle wholeness. These buildings provide considerable evidence that Alexander’s approach to design can lead to powerful architecture.

Battle has its weaknesses. A first concern is that the Eishin story is told only through Alexander’s eyes, so one has no independent verification of the actual success of the design process or finished campus. A larger problem is Alexander’s combative tone: The book’s warlike imagery projects an incongruent mean-spiritedness jarringly out of place in relation to the gentle, empathetic way of envisioning and making that are the existential and conceptual crux of Alexander’s design approach. One hopes that purging himself of the difficult Eishin experience through completing this book will shift Alexander’s writing back toward the hope, grace, and charity that necessarily infuse his remarkable design vision.

Phenomenologically, Alexander’s work remains central because it demonstrates the inescapable significance of the built environment for contributing to gracious human lifeworlds. “Our well being,” he writes, “originates in large part in the spatial order of the world” (p. 382). The pattern language for the Eishin School is a stunning example of how a group of committed clients and designers can locate and describe environmental and architectural elements that might forge a place of unique character and atmosphere. The many plans, photographs, and testimonials included in *Battle* indicate that the Eishin campus has a vibrant sense of place that students and faculty have come to cherish. This achievement demonstrates how the engaged mode of understanding and making advocated by Alexander can effect life-enhancing environments and places.

Outline of the Eishin Pattern Language

(supporting explication of patterns not included)

1. Global Character of Campus

- 1.1. An outer boundary surrounds the campus.
- 1.2. Contained by this outer boundary there is an outer precinct. The outer precinct surrounds an inner precinct.
- 1.3. The inner precinct is a densely built area where School and College have their major buildings and activities.
- 1.4. The Outer Precinct is an area for relaxation, sport, outdoor activities and recreation.
- 1.5. As a whole, the Campus is given its character by stone foundation walls, natural concrete walls, wooden columns, white plaster surfaces, some green surfaces, wide overhanging roofs, dark roofs, stones and grass and pebbles on the ground.

2. Inner Precinct

- 2.1. The Entrance Street to the campus is a highly visible pedestrian Way. It begins at the Outer Boundary of the Campus, and ends at the Inner Precinct.
 - 2.2. The Small Gate marks the outer end of the Entrance Street.
 - 2.3. The Entrance Street is flanked with walls and trees. It is extremely quiet.
 - 2.4. Where the Entrance Street meets the Inner Precinct, there is a second, much larger, Main Gate. It is three stories high.
 - 2.5. Beyond the Main Gate, there is a Public Yard. Opening onto this Public Yard, there is an immense building, the Great Hall. The Great Hall shapes and forms the Public Yard.
 - 2.6. Beyond the Public Yard is the Tanoji Center, the core of the Inner Precinct. This Center is the meeting place of College and High School.
- Etc. (2.7–2.14)

3. Buildings of Inner Precinct (3.1–3.12)

4. Streets of Inner Precinct (4.1–4.15)

5. Outer Precinct (5.1–5.25)

6. Features of Inner Precinct (6.1–6.22)

7. Special Outdoor Details (7.1–7.8)

8. Interior Building Character (8.1–8.9)

Seamon is Editor of Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology.

Book Review

A Pattern Language of Pedagogical Place

Prakash Nair, Randall Fielding, & Jeffery Lackney, 2009. *The Language of School Design: Design Patterns for 21st Century Schools*. Minneapolis: Designshare.

Reviewed by Ingrid Leman Stefanovic

In 1977, architect Christopher Alexander and colleagues published their now-classic *A Pattern Language*. Described by the authors as “extremely practical,” the book worked to identify solutions to common design problems. A central aim was to guide individuals and communities “in the actual process of construction” (Alexander et al. 1977, p. x).

Some 30 years later, architect Prakash Nair and his colleagues have taken inspiration from Alexander’s work to develop a pattern language dedicated to schools. The authors claim that, because “transformation is painstakingly slow in the world of school design,” there is a need to develop a “common design vocabulary” (Nair et al. 2009, p. 13, p. 14).

This book serves as a useful reminder of the significance of schools as dwelling places. As Foran and Olson (2008, p. 46) point out, places of learning “influence more than just curricular outcomes in that they shape who we are and how we relate to one another.” With surprisingly little work available on human factors of school design, it seems evident that “a radical rethinking of the use of space in learning... is clearly needed at this juncture” (Chism 2002, p. 11).

In evaluating this pattern language, I first highlight other useful but, in my view, limited approaches to understand pedagogical place. I then turn to Nair and colleagues’ efforts to understand patterns of school design. Finally, I propose that, nevertheless, there might be room for more careful thinking about these issues from a phenomenological perspective.

Schools & Behavioral Research

Some of the most interesting contributions to exploring how the physical design of classrooms affects children’s and teachers’ behaviors emerges from en-

vironmental psychology (Graetz & Goliber 2002). Several of these studies measure the impact of discrete elements of physical design upon learning. For instance, physical contaminants, from heavy metals to pesticides, have been shown to adversely affect cognitive development, sensory-motor skills, reading levels, attentiveness, and overall psychological well-being (Edelstein 2002; Evans 2006). Other studies have monitored the effects of chronic noise exposure, lighting, crowding, or overall building quality on children’s behavior (Klatte et al. 2010; Kumar et al. 2008; Evans et al. 2010; Graetz and Goliber 2002). Several thoughtful design solutions are provided by these environment-behavior researchers, for example, making use of warm color tones to encourage quieter play; or facilitating interpersonal cooperation through more spatially “well-defined” settings (Cohen and Trostle, 1990, p. 755).

Nevertheless, while serving as valuable contributions to understanding the relation between physical school design and student well-being, this work presents at least two concerns that relate to determinism and reductionism. I address each in turn.

Determinism & Reductionism

In much of the research undertaken by environmental psychologists, there is frequently an implicit suggestion that the relationship between children and their school environments is unidirectional, with physical elements *determining* students’ behavior. To be sure, findings frequently do indicate a significant correlation between environmental factors and human behavior. But the question emerges: Are complex human behaviors properly understood *exclusively* in terms of physical, causal determinants?

Might there not be meaningful cultural, historical, political, gender, or personality characteristics that affect and help to define the complexities of a pedagogical sense of place? Might not additional insights be elicited through a methodology that investigates the *relation between* children and built spaces, without privileging the physical environment as a linear determinant of human behavior?

Architectural historian Mark Dudek (2007, p. 9) supports this possibility when he points out that “the relationship is never linear... Rather, education and architecture enter into a relationship where, if everything goes according to plan, the two dimensions merge together in a symbiotic formula to create a complex child-oriented environment which enables children to learn and the community to prosper.”

Educator S. H. Martin (2002, p. 139) agrees that “a classroom environment is much more than a place to house books, desks and materials. A classroom is a system and can be better understood if it is seen that way. There is a complex relationship between the physical structure and arrangement of the room, the teacher, the students, and the distribution of space.”

Accordingly, we come to our second question: Is there some benefit to be derived from a broader systems approach to understanding pedagogical place, rather than a reductionist approach that focuses on singular design elements? For instance, while there is ample evidence to suggest that noise has an adverse effect on student performance, what happens when complex factors intersect, such as different ceiling heights, random or ordered furniture design, colors, or natural vs. fluorescent lighting?

How might these elements be affected by the age of the building, by cultural traditions, by the social constructions of language and educational curricula? Quantitative methods are well developed to investigate *single* design elements but may be less helpful when describing, in a more holistic fashion, *the experience of the school as a pedagogical place*.

As phenomenologists have shown, the human-environment relation is not unidirectional but an iterative temporal and placial relation in flux (Casey 1993; Seamon & Mugerauer 2000). Might schools be *read* differently than as a collection of discrete, physical determinants of human behavior, and more from the perspective of a holistic experience of place?

Building a Pattern Language

This holistic approach to understanding built form inspired Alexander’s innovative pattern language. “No pattern is an isolated entity,” he wrote, but is supported by other patterns, which means that “when you build a thing, you cannot merely build that thing in isolation, but you must also repair the world around it, and within it, so that the larger world at that one place becomes more coherent and more whole” (Alexander et al. 1977, p. xiii).

Taking inspiration from Alexander’s holistic approach, Nair and colleagues aim to develop a pattern language specifically dedicated to the design of schools. But rather than study the effects on children of isolated design elements, the authors identify larger, more meaningful, *patterns* of school design. The authors compare a well-designed building to poetry rather than prose, precisely “because the former can be understood at many different levels that go beyond the meaning of the individual words” (2009, p. 18).

“Today,” they argue, “we know that human brains are hard-wired to understand and respond to patterns in all spheres of our life and, particularly, to those that exist within our built environments” (p. 13). The authors develop 28 patterns as a start for defining a “graphic language for the design of healthy and functional learning environments” (p. 14).

What, for Nair and colleagues constitutes a “pattern”? In their view, “there has to be a certain universality to its application” (p. 19). Even though diverse examples of specific designs may emerge, a pattern relates to the “common human experience” the disparate designs evoke. For instance, three very different schools each possess a distinctive identity. Nevertheless, they reflect the common human experience of design pattern no. 23, “local signature,” which states that “all schools have something about them that is special and unique... and the architecture should preferably showcase this” (p. 167).

These 28 design patterns are also evaluated in terms of pattern *type*, presented in terms of six categories of experience: (1) parts of the whole; (2) spatial quality; (3) brain-based; (4) high performance; (5) community connected; and (6) higher order. For instance, design patterns related to a school’s specific functional areas are placed under “parts of the whole.” Examples include pattern 3, “student display

space,” and pattern 8, “casual eating areas,” both of which exemplify a self-contained “part” reflecting the experience of school as a “whole.”

An example of the second pattern type, “spatial quality,” is pattern 9, “transparency,” which contends that “learning should be visible and celebrated” (p. 88). Here, the emphasis is on spatial aspects that exceed functional and physical boundaries. Under the third category of patterns, “brain-based” spaces, one finds pattern 18, “designing for multiple intelligences,” which points to the need to incorporate a wide range of learning modes that include the linguistic, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, and so forth.

The fourth pattern category, “high performance spaces,” includes pattern 19, “daylight and solar energy,” which relates the need to incorporate sustainable dimensions in school design. In turn, pattern category 5, “community connected,” reflects the importance of pattern 2, “welcoming entry”; and pattern 23, “local signature,” since these two patterns implicitly invite the community to feel drawn in and related to the school. Last, pattern category 6, “higher order,” reflects the potential integrative power of the patterns and is consolidated in pattern 28, “bringing it all together,” which indicates how the pattern-language approach “makes it possible to focus on one school element while also noting how elements interact—with each other, with the whole school, and with the larger community” (p. 184).

Extending the Pattern Language

There is much value in Nairn and colleagues’ work. First, the authors have moved beyond providing a simple inventory of physical architectural features. They emphasize the need to accommodate different levels of human experience in school design. Second, through what appears to be a high degree of collegial collaboration, the authors identify valuable school patterns that range from ensuring that the welcoming entry invites all who enter to feel at home (pattern 1) to the reminder for architects to provide natural ventilation (pattern 20) or to reflect the local environment in a school’s design (pattern 23).

Other insightful suggestions include provision of smaller cafés in addition to a central cafeteria (pattern 8—“casual eating areas”) and “watering hole space” (pattern 16) that would allow for informal corridor

socializing and small group projects. Other innovative patterns include “cave space” (pattern 17), which emphasizes quiet areas for individual study; and “learning, lighting, and color” (pattern 21), which calls into question uniform brightness requirements and advocates varying lighting levels.

Although the authors speak of the 28 patterns’ “universality,” this broad applicability is not meant to impede design diversity. As the multiple cases of actual school designs testify, the language delineated in this work supports diverse physical constructions that, nevertheless, appear to accommodate unifying patterns of lived experience. In addition, the authors recognize that their 28 patterns “are only a beginning” (p. 14). School designers are encouraged to view the patterns as a “starting point” and, as appropriate, make modifications and write entirely new patterns. In this sense, this pattern language for school design is very much a work in progress.

My own sense is that there is room for identifying additional patterns—e.g., “legibility” (What contributes to a school building that is easy to traverse?); or “safety” (What contributes to a school that offers security but neither risk-taking nor a stifling sense of over-protection?). There is also a need for Nairn and colleagues to better explain how their pattern language arose. The authors state, without explanation, that the patterns “have been ordered” into the six overarching categories (p. 21.), but it is not clear how these categories came into being. A similar problem arises when the authors define the physical attributes of spatial, physiological, psychological, and behavioral “realms of human experience within the purview of school planning and design” without explaining or adequately justifying their categorization. (p. 19). In my view, a more comprehensive, justified substantiation of claims would be helpful.

Phenomenology, Place, & Pedagogy

Reviewers of *The Language of School Design* have suggested that, unlike Alexander’s own work, Nairn’s patterns are oversimplified, naively universalizing, and less diverse in scale, limited mostly to components of school buildings rather than to the larger community. (Jelacic 2010). These criticisms are not entirely fair, given that Nairn and colleagues emphasize that their pattern language is preliminary. They

emphasized that variations of their pattern language will find expression in different places and in different socio-cultural milieus (Nair et.al. 2009, p. 14)

As the authors would agree, however, there is scope for expanding their efforts in a number of directions. For instance, many school studies ignore children's own voices. A phenomenological reading of children's artwork, reflective essays, and sharing of their thoughts spontaneously might allow for new visions of school design respecting children's own imaginative lived experiences of pedagogical places.

Similarly, work has been undertaken on the theme of place-based ethics (Smith 2001; Stefanovic 2000). Finding ways to deconstruct values and broader community world views might shed light on taken-for-granted ways in which we naturally, and perhaps sometimes unreflectively, engage in the design of pedagogical places.

Finally, might schools be described phenomenologically, from a deeply embodied approach such as suggested by Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa (2005, p. 19), who argues that much modern architecture has successfully "housed the intellect and the eye, but... has left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories, imagination and dreams, homeless." How does a school smell, and what does that tell us about its sense of place? How does it feel beneath one's feet or to the touch of one's hand, as one struggles to open an uncooperative window? How does the dialectic between warm and cold spaces, or between light and dark spaces, affect our sense of place in schools? Again, children might help elicit these dimensions of pedagogical place.

In my view, there is a need to attend more carefully to school design, whether the challenges arise through new construction or through renovation of existing buildings, many of which in North America have been built post-World-War-II. Phenomenological interpretation of place is sorely needed when it comes to our places of learning. It is, to draw upon Pallasmaa's metaphor, time to bring schools home.

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Porosity and Materiality in the Bathscape

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Dedicated bathers recognize in the blush of ceramic tile or in the soft texture of aged wood the mark of ceremonial distinction found in the design of sacred rites. The traditional bathhouse and its rituals represent, above all else, the association of health, vitality, and respite with the permeability of flesh.

Contained at the heart of many such customs—the Russian *banya* or Turkish *hamâm*, for instance—is also a longstanding communal significance, which differentiates the bathhouse from the private bathroom. These elemental and cultural facets of the bathscape define its essence as an outward porosity. The dilation of the pores in the swelter-form infinitesimal dermal portals. The languor of matter and surface mirror the relaxation of social tensions and the sympathies shared between unburdened and restful bodies. The bathhouse is, in this sense, historically designed and built for a sanctified observance of opening up to the world, intermingling with it, and not, as modern spa culture often calls to mind, retreating from it.

The coming together of materiality and sociality in the bathscape is perhaps most reflective of its elemental essence. The flesh of the bather not only touches and opens itself to water. It *is* mostly water. At the root of all sensuous contact with the bathscape is this waterlogged body. Elemental forces infiltrate the mediating barrier of skin, bonding the inside and the outside in perceptual and physiological immediacy. The body sops up condensation and perspires.

Bathhouses are pumps, conveying substances between ourselves and the world in a primal, instinctive relationship. Nineteenth-century surgeon and dermatologist Erasmus Wilson wrote that:

The Bath is an animal instinct: and, *par excellence*, a human instinct; it is as much a necessity of our nature as drink. We drink because we thirst—an *interior sense*. We bathe because water, the material of drink, is a desire of outward man—an *exterior sense* [1].

The interior and exterior movement of the bathscape, however, is often elusive. Such is water's behavior on skin, partially deflected into beads and partially absorbed, spreading out and evading capture; it takes its own time to dry, even when obliged. "Water escapes me yet marks me, and there is not a thing I can do about it," wrote French poet Francis Ponge [2]. With steam, however, water is forced into feverish submission; it has neither the determination nor the obedience of liquid, which is often its most privileged state. The emanation of vapor marks an ecstasy in which the oscillation of particles surpasses a material threshold. It crosses over into a delirious trance, radiating in capricious swirls and ambling about like a sleepwalker. Ironically, the image of steam is not aggravation but just its opposite: it enacts languorousness only by way of a dreamlike delirium.

Nowhere does this elemental depth of steam bathing manifest more elegantly than in bathscape architecture. The various edifices adhere to a simple functionality but also command ritual and communal meaning. The design of the facility often reflects the practical and aesthetic demands of its social and natural environment.

For example, the close quarters of the Finnish *sauna* or Russian *banya* captures steam in an intimate and direct manner, satisfying the therapeutic needs borne by frigid and rural landscapes. The elemental is permitted to roam more freely at the Turkish or Roman bathhouses, diffusing through large public halls and being assigned to different

rooms. Even the basic shapes and materials employed have a certain bearing on bathing. Hard lines cut through the cloudy mass, while curves hug and embrace it. A dense wooden ledge extends into the haze and holds heat less readily than the radiating intensity of marble. The bathscape furnishes a synthesis of the materiality of steam with the materials of construction.

Steam is wrapped in a translucent skin that impulsively shifts this way or that, misdirecting one sense while engulfing another. It elucidates nothing and filters everything into a tremendous kinetic blur: it is an envelope of confusion. The bathscape's visual qualities are always obscure, even as it reaches out and touches the body. Clouds form themselves around a law of visual indefiniteness. This is only made possible by the admittance of light into the blooming and gaseous frenzy, which is reflected and diffused. Steam reveals what it wants.

Elizabeth Diller, a designer of Blur Building—a Swiss lakeshore pavilion set inside an artificially generated cloud—described the effect of cloudiness upon technological and high-resolution obsessed culture as always privative and negating: “‘To blur’ is to make indistinct, to dim, to shroud, to cloud, to make vague, to obfuscate. Blurred vision is an impairment, its vision mediated... understood as a loss” [3].

The privation of sight and the primacy of the skin present an important consideration for bathscape design. Given its amorphousness, it is perhaps not only through visual form that steam is translated into an aesthetic, but also by virtue of material quality. The mediation of vapor can be understood as an infusion as much as it is a loss.

One way in which the sensate materiality of the bathscape becomes articulated is through what phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard referred to as the material imagination. Even prior to the design of the bathing facility, the imagination is fed by richly elemental sources. Without the privileging of optical clarity, the form of water yields to “images that stem *directly from matter*” [4]. Bachelard traced the connection between the imagination and the materiality of water through dreaming, wherein images are fundamentally dependent upon elements:

Dreams come before contemplation. Before becoming a conscious sight, every landscape is an oneiric experience. Only those scenes that have already appeared in dreams can be viewed with an aesthetic passion [5].

Edifices that convey and contain a bodily encounter with steam lend themselves to the originary source of dreaming. The elemental in dreaming resonates with the oneiric qualities of the bathscape. If the stuff of material imagination—that is, poetic images inspired directly by elemental matter—can be as responsible for architectural edifices as their formal causes, then the various cults of steam, with their curative, therapeutic, communal, ritualistic, or leisurely practices, embody a direct mirroring of the qualities of lingering particles, of water vapor's tangibility and depth.

The Turkish *hamâm* is perhaps the ultimate institution for the imaginative allure of the elemental. The guiding aesthetic is an interchange of the substantial and the insubstantial, where densities of marble and granite encase a steamy effluence. The Turkish bath is very much a modern preservation of the ancient Roman *thermae*, consisting of chambers allotted varying temperatures. Stately columns support the domed ceiling of a great hall, where trellises and vegetation encircle elaborate fountains. A wide stadium of seats, interspersed with ornately designed basins, crowns the bathing area. Vaulted stoves are used to bolster and regulate the heat.

Bathers move between the outer and middle chambers, taking coffee and sprawling out upon the stone slabs as bath attendants ensure that the skin is sufficiently moistened. In the inner chamber, the bathers are shampooed as water gets thrown upon the hot marble floor and gusts of vapor engorge the room [6]. Like the famous Diocletian windows of the *thermae*, slatted semicircular windows or patterns of small recessed glass covered openings—“stars of stained glass”—are inscribed on the central dome ceiling of the chamber to let in sunlight [7]. The traditional *hamâm* is a monument to porosity, a space of ritual cleansing and reverence.

The importance of light in both the Roman and Turkish contexts marks an architectural embrace of obfuscation. Light is normally associated with space, but for the bathscape, just the opposite holds: light merely enhances the obscurity

of matter. The partial light enters and reflects off the face of the steam, both illuminating and half-concealing the room, wrapping its way around the bold stone features and leaving the softer angles to be swallowed by shadows.

The dance of heat and light on the flesh, too, affects this image, and accentuates the sense of touch. The total alteration of atmosphere between rooms, the attention paid to each, demonstrates a certain imaginative appeal of matter. The form only follows after, sketching in the details of this dreamlike ambulation, carrying bodies from one state to the next and reveling in the shifting moods.

Another instance, the thermal bath of Vals in the Swiss canton of Graubünden, exemplifies a slightly different image by adapting the traditional Turkish ritual to a contemporary aesthetic. Rather than house the steam under a rounded ceiling where it intermingles with light and air, architect Peter Zumthor designed this cave-like bath “embedded” in the Alpine hillside to call to mind “images of quarries and water flowing spontaneously from the ground” [8].

Though Zumthor’s design makes use of darkness and hard geometrical angles, dim slits of light emitted along “fissures” between concrete slabs bounce off the water and enflame the whirling steam, calling forth the same underlying principle as the conventional bathhouse: an aesthetic of sustained permeation. The stratified walls indicate not so much a particular form but, rather, the undifferentiated material of a rock quarry.

Again, the bather is reminded of sensate materiality, running from the body into the cavernous interior and calling upon the surrounding landscape. The contrast between the stone’s substantiality and the wisps of mottled hot air, and between the darkened corners and the shafts of sunlight are, as Bachelard claimed, ultimately the work of an elemental drama that begins to unfold first in dreams.

The permeating effect of steam, even as permeation into mental space, is therefore the basic pattern to which all images of the bathscape conform. Exchanges of movement and touch between sweating bodies and the idle veil of moisture generate a powerful oneiric image: the obfuscation of form and the rising forth of an entranc-

ing and mystifying substance, a matter that encompasses and pervades. It infuses the mind, seeps into the dream world as a vivid and formative image, and becomes reconstituted in the edifice.

There is no surprise, then, in the fact that various sites of geothermal activity and all of the traditions built around steam have been historically imbued with such sacred and ritualistic meaning. The architecture, the customs, and the mythology of steam are bound together by their poetic weight, by the echo of dreaming that transpires in the enigmatic swirl of clouds contained by human artifice.

Elemental water contains within it an imperceptible system of rendering boundaries fluid: it filters, transports, and absorbs, through osmosis and penetration, between the interior and exterior of the body. Vapor is the perfect agent for facilitating this transfer, loosening and prying open membranes with its vague tendrils. The geothermal pools of Iceland perhaps exhibit this tendency best, both in their attributed health benefits and in another form of permeation: socialization.

Sundhöllin, one of the older pools in Reykjavík, exemplifies the same adjective that Walter Benjamin once used to describe the city of Naples: porous. The facility services both the old and young who begin their day early, taking in the steam. As with the Roman *thermae*, the ritual association of bathing and health is transposed to everyday public routine, though in this case it is by the hand of unassuming municipal architecture. Incorporated into this routine is the opportunity to socialize, to catch up on community gossip, to debate politics, or to banter idly.

For these Icelanders, the heart of community life is the city pool. For most cultures with longstanding bathing institutions, the public bath demonstrates water’s porosity as a physiological and a social phenomenon, forming a communal space in which conversation and leisure can move freely outside of the confines of business or government. The bathscape, however, differs from the marketplace or the pub, the café or the Greek *agora*, in that all social activity is also water-oriented. Consequently, the pace of conversation parallels the pace of the bathing ritual. It shelters the bathers, provides sanctuary from outside anxieties and wor-

ries. The ritual permits unhurried dialogue without interference from the commotion of urban life.

The social porosity of bath culture has in many places lost out to modern technological innovation and the dislocation of people from community by increasing suburbanization. The modern home has, however, retained some of the medicinal and therapeutic aspects of bath culture in the form of consumerism. The private bath is now the place to apply ointments and salves, bath salts and soaps. Unlike the bathhouse, the bathroom's organizing principle is individualism, removing the ritual from communal space and reinventing the bathscape with a kind of bathing Protestantism. The expert bath attendant is replaced by total democratization: plumbing is now the only authority revered by the bather.

But this modernized bathscape undercuts the most essential elements of the old bathhouse: its communal character and its ritual significance. Instead, the idea of moving the steam bath into the private home strips away cultural tradition in favor of expedient luxury. Maria Kaika describes the infrastructural engineering of the modern home as one of "selective porosity," in which the domestic sphere excludes certain socio-natural processes while admitting others: bringing clean, hot water instantly to the tap of the bath while invisibly carrying away waste; preserving a private and familiar space at the exclusion of public life [9].

The problem posed by selective porosity lies in disallowing water to achieve its elemental potential, exploiting certain properties while dispensing with others. The private bath so often reduces the bathscape to its sheer material utility without regard for greater aesthetic value. The interplay of obfuscation and light is exchanged for an unsubtle, sanitary whiteness, and the entire scene loses its sense of depth and dignity. In the modern bathing practice of the private home, vulgar sensuality takes the place

of rite and decorum. No coffee is served, no birch is spread, and solitude always appears more self-indulgent than meditative.

The loss of the communal bathscape and its modern enclosure in the private home is really a loss of apprehending water's essentially porous nature: the way it slides between cracks, breaches barriers, and mediates between self and world. Few who are possessed by the modern proclivity for technological accommodation over aesthetic propriety could appreciate the fellow feeling and elemental profundity of the traditional public bathhouse.

Notes

1. Erasmus Wilson, *The Eastern, or Turkish Bath: Its History, Revival in Britain, and Application to the Purposes of Health*. (London: John Churchill, 1861), p. 1.
2. Francis Ponge, *The Voice of Things*. Trans. Beth Archer (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 51.
3. Diller, Elizabeth. "Defining Atmosphere: The Blur Building", *Doors of Perception 6: Lightness*, 2000, www.doorsofperception.com, p. 1 (accessed Nov. 20, 2012).
4. Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*. Trans. Edith R. Farrell (Dallas, TX: The Pegasus Foundation, 1983), p. 1.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
6. Wilson, p. xxi.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–38.
8. Ludwig Abache, "Thermal Baths, Vals, Switzerland," 2001; www.galinsky.com/buildings/baths (accessed Nov. 20, 2012).
9. Maria Kaika, *City of Flows: Modernity, Nature, and the City*. (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 53–66.

Phenomenology, Poetics, and Architectural Custodianship

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Currently, architectural phenomenology gives most attention to the existential significance of the built fabric in an increasingly transient, globalized world. Seldom does this research refer directly to professional design work outside the philosophical field from which architectural phenomenology emerged.

For example, Japanese architect Tadao Ando does not claim to be a phenomenologist, but some of his projects and writings display the qualities of a phenomenologically sensitive architect—for example, material composition and treatment, the working of light and shadow, a shifting journey through the building, and so forth. Ando proposes that "...architectural expression [can be] born that is capable of moving the human spirit and allows us to glimpse the eternal within the moment" [1].

Similarly, Swiss architect Peter Zumthor says nothing about phenomenology yet works to create an architectural atmosphere using lived experience as a design tool [2]. Zumthor's projects and writings exhibit a sensitivity and understanding for the manner of *things in themselves*, specifically the materialization of his spatial constructions. His built works are some of the most acclaimed examples of

an implicitly phenomenological architecture today, not only in terms of finished buildings but also in terms of his way of thinking, making, and connecting to everyday reality [3]. As commentators have noted in regard to his 2011 Serpentine Gallery Pavilion in London:

[L]ooking at more than the physical fabric and form of the building, [Zumthor] often draws inspiration from memories of childhood experience... [He has] created a contemplative space that evokes the spiritual dimension of our physical environment... emphasizing the role the senses and emotions play in our experience of architecture [4].

Or, as Zumthor writes about his work more broadly:

A consciousness of time passing and an awareness of the human lives that have been acted out in these places and rooms charged them with special aura... Architecture is exposed to life. If its body is sensitive enough, it can assume a quality that bears witness to the reality of past life [5].

In the last two decades, one can identify many architectural works that exhibit implicit phenomenological attributes, sensitivities in approach, and a desire to engage human experience beyond the visual. Illustrations can be drawn from the works of ONIX Architekten, Lassila Hirvilammi Architects, Suppose Design Office, David Chipperfield Architects, Stanton Williams Architects, and John Pawson.



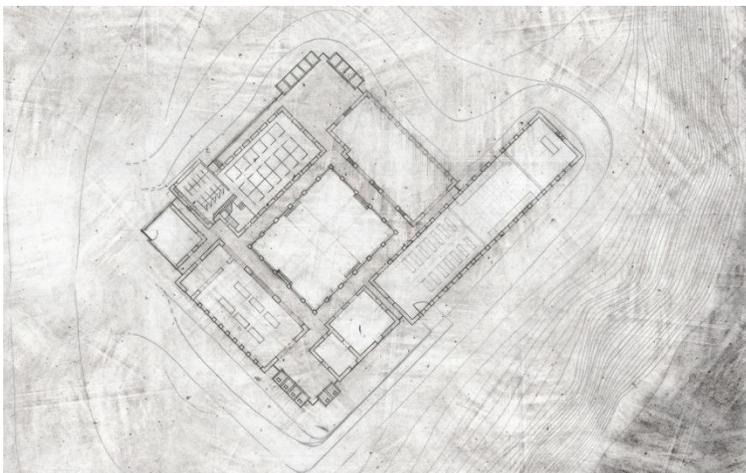
One example is the 2004 Finnish Kärämäki Shingle Church for which Lassila Hirvilammi Architects sought a simple structural and functional design respectful of the Finnish religious vernacular [6]. The design drew on traditional construction methods and local craftsmen who fabricated the church.

This building is rich in sensuous qualities: the roughness of tar-dipped shingles and patina of the traditionally sawn timbers and hand-chiselled joints [7]. One experiences the thick interior light heavy in material residue, the aromas of a journey across fresh meadows infused with solid building scents, and the sound of flowing water intimating the passage of time set against a calming architectural stasis. This rich, multivalent environmental experience was not the recorded intention of architect Anssi Lassila, who instead emphasized the role of craft and vernacular construction [8].

There is another group of less satisfactory architectural designs using natural materials in their raw state as these materials work mostly as a *veneer* for aesthetical aspiration. These design efforts offer practical examples of the phenomenological criticism of ocular-centric modernity and the overbearing emphasis on visual images [9].

One example of this reduction of materiality to only its visual aspects is revealing old brick work, a common practice in modern building conversions. This design decision relates more to aesthetic criteria than to phenomenological understanding. Many projects assume such an ocular-centric attitude toward materialization, whereby design decisions are limited by a visual aesthetic at the cost of broader existential potential. These ways of designing are valuable in that a more sensuously rich environment is an important counter to the ethos of our technologically globalized epoch [10]. These works offer tantalising signposts for a movement toward a total bodily experience beyond the visual and cognitive. As Zumthor suggests:

We perceive atmosphere through our emotional sensibility—a form of perception that works incredibly quickly.... Something inside us tells us an enormous amount straight away. We are capable of immediate appreciation, of a spontaneous emotional response [11].



One major factor in modern design is the “trend-image,” which can be marketed and distributed on a global scale. Most of this imagery, however, provides no place for the non-ocular and affective dimensions of human experience [12]. The built environment is too readily reduced to a flattened world that is mostly visual and cannot deliver the full reality of human experience. The result is what Kavanaugh called the “hegemony of the image”:

[A]rchitecture no longer gets its hands dirty with materiality of building; rather [it] has the tendency to skate upon the shimmering superficiality of simulacra—collections of visual sensations passing rapidly before the eye, space flattened out into mere two-dimensions, devoid of engagement [13].

Architect as a Custodian of Poetics

Much of the world today faces placelessness and an existential alienation compounded by a saturation of dislocated imagery devoid of space or time [14]. In many projects, architectural experience has seemingly been consigned to a design factor of simplified, programmatic spatial dynamics [15]. My concern here is not a uni-

versal critique of all architecture or architects of the modern era. Factors shaping the design process are vast and varied; many are economically constrained and remorsefully powerful. There has been exciting progress made in the digital design field, greater integration of sustainable ideals, and the development of innovative architectural technologies.

In advocating for a phenomenological sensibility, I do not suggest that these design advances be dismissed. Rather, I argue that, for the architect who becomes more phenomenologically alert, the design aim is a poetics of the construct and a fullness of architectural experience. The goal is a more richly embodied everyday situation and the architectural support for that which may become [16]. In other words, architectural design is not so much the realization of an image that “results in disregard for a physical experience of the space that stimulates all the senses” [17]. Rather, architectural design is a creative intervention centrally concerned with everyday environmental embodiment.

Phenomenologically-inspired architecture cannot be universally mass-produced or generated through rationalized tectonics or constructs of dislocated geometry. Only the potential for existential emergence can be sought within an architectural intervention. An intuitive sensitivity might actualize phenomenological possibility within the emergent built fabric. The architect becomes the custodian of potential poetics in the now and the yet to be. An architecture of phenomenological potential can contribute a poetry of existence within our built horizon and reveal insights as to our being with place and time:

The kettle sings well, for pieces of iron are so arranged in the bottom as to produce a peculiar melody in which one may hear the echoes of a cataract muffled by clouds, of a distant sea breaking among the rocks, a rainstorm sweeping through a bamboo forest, or of the sighing of pines on a faraway hill [18].

Ephemeral Experience & Design

Architectural phenomenology is not simply a performance-based guide for universal application. Rather, it seeks to make contact with the poetic intangibility of the built environment and that which re-

plenishes the ever fading connection of humans to their lived embodiment:

[T]he skin of the earth is where we live... we live in it, on it, and rarely far away from it... the contemporary metropolis is hugging the ground, drawn to it, but also alienated from it [19].

A phenomenological sensitivity might provide one way to reconnect with this world. The perfume of unseen spring daffodils or the warming radiance of sun-drenched stone are happenings either alien to architecture or integral to its lived totality [20]. Understanding taken-for-granted experiences like these are not directly part of the conscious act of design but rather the tacit sub-cognitive stratum that gives impetus to starting points rarely realized within the more conscious moments of designing. One example is the Dutch architectural firm, Onix Architecten, whose principals use analogue drawing as a tool for creative thinking:

[Y]our hand does something different from what your brain dictates. While sketching, you are conversing with yourself. The thought is clear: it helps to truly get to the bottom of an assignment with both mind and body [21].

This description suggests that, within analogue design (for example, drawing, modeling, doodling, and so forth) an intuitive sensibility can emerge within the nuances of a suspended-judgment action. Architects may never realize a link between a finished design and ephemeral experiences, even though those experiences may provide the existential grounding for moments of creative discovery. A single lived moment may give rise to an instant of revelatory clarity [22]. One example is the depth of shadow carved out by light:

[F]ire invents light and heat, and through this light the darkness gains new importance... the fire invents a room where there is light. The fire is a producer of space and, in the shadow, mystery is born [23].

An architectural phenomenology can contribute to the re-emergence of that which has become submerged beneath the taken-for-granted pictorial perception of the everyday. Philosopher Filip Mattens unintentionally points to this submergence, when, commenting on architectural photography, he writes that photographic images allow us to see:

the compositional qualities of architectural design. The suspension of sound and movement, the removal of orientation, the reduction of full-blown experience to a merely static, two-dimensional image—paradoxically—increases our sensitivity to space [24].

Ironically, this description indicates why image-based architecture removes viewers from multivalent sensuousness and reduces the wholeness of architectural experience to commodification and readily consumable “ocular-architecture” [25]. Clearly, an architecture that evokes all the senses does not deny visual pleasure but incorporates that encounter within the totality of sensuous and affective experience.

An Emerging Architectural Poetics

Most broadly, architects can be helped by architectural phenomenology to open themselves to design sensitivities as they might be undergirded by everyday experience not normally noticed because of the lifeworld and natural attitude. In regard to his Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, Zumthor described his design aim as “intense and memorable, as with the materials themselves—full of memory and time.” He hoped to “help its audience take the time to relax, to observe and then, perhaps, start to talk again—or not.” There might be “an immersive, transformative experience” [26].

I would suggest that it is Zumthor’s desire to create an architecture of experiential significance that, in turn, may touch users and visitors with a mode of encounter that includes the visual but is more wide-ranging and deeper. For the architect, sensitivity is one of the most important tillers for negotiating the turbulent waters of design. Sensitivity is a gauge against which choices are made and a ground from which the sub-cognitive might coalesce into unscripted freedom.

Architectural motions conducive to phenomenological possibility do not exist in a proscribed design manual. Rather, these motions grow with each new design, explored through the medium of creative freedom. The provision for phenomenological potential in the built landscape is at least partly the responsibility of the architect. The experience of this emerging poetics is the joy of those who engage with it now and in the future.

Notes

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4. S. O’Brien, *Peter Zumthor: Hortus Conclusus. Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2011*. London: Koenig, 2011, 9.
5. Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture*, 26 [see note 2].
6. R. Klanten & L. Feireiss, *Closer to God: Religious and Sacred Architecture*. Berlin: Gestalten, 2010, 30.
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11. Zumthor, *Atmospheres*, 13 [see note 2].
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20. H. Lefas, *Dwelling and Architecture*. Berlin: Jovis GmbH, 2009, 79.
21. H. de Haan, *Wood Works Onix*. Rotterdam: NAI, 2009, 112.
22. A. Pérez-Gómez, Abstraction in Modern Architecture, in *The Religious Imagination in Modern and Contemporary Architecture*, ed. R. Hejduk & J. Williamson. NY: Routledge, 2011, 246.
23. P. Olaf Fjeld, *Sverre Fehn*. NY: Monacelli Press, 2009, 73.
24. F. Mattens, The Architecture of Space, in *Aesthetics of Architecture*, ed. D. Goldblatt & R. Paden. London: Wiley, 2011, 114.
25. P. Tidwell, Place, Memory and the Architectural Image, in *Archipelago*, ed. P. Mackeith, 149-155. Tucson, AZ: Osimo Press, 2009, 155.
26. O’Brien, *Peter Zumthor*, 8 [see note 4].

Images: Exploration models using plaster and site sandstone (p. 16); plaster-block model of design for Cistercian monastery (p. 17, upper image); plan for Cistercian monastery (p. 17, lower image).

Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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