



# Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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**T**his *EAP* begins 27 years of publication and marks the first digital-only edition. Because of this shift to on-line *EAPs* only, we are reducing the number of issues from three to two—winter and fall. Digital copy allows for two longer issues per year rather than three shorter issues. Readers will note that this first digital issue is 32 pages—considerably longer than most previous paper issues.

This issue includes the regular *EAP* features of “comments from readers,” “items of interest” and “citations received.” We learned the sad news several weeks ago that phenomenological psychologist **Bernd Jager**, a long-time *EAP* supporter, passed away in March, 2015. As a tribute, we reprint passages from two of his most noteworthy writings, “Theorizing, Journeying, Dwelling” (1975) and “Theorizing the Elaboration of Place” (1983).

As a “book note,” we reproduce a portion of an interview with phenomenological philosopher **Edward Casey**, published in the recent volume, *Exploring the Work of Edward Casey*, edited by **Azucena Cruz-Pierre** and **Donald A. Landes**. *Northern Earth* editor **John Billingsley** reviews archaeologist **Christopher Tilley’s** *Interpreting Landscapes*.

Longer entries begin with philosopher **Dylan Trigg’s** commentary that he presented at the special session on “Twenty-Five years of *EAP*,” held at the annual meeting of the International Association for Environmental Philosophy (IAEP) in October. In turn, independent research **Stephen Wood** offers a first-person phenomenology of moving to a new house, including the lived significance of embodied emplacement.

Next, anthropologist **Jenny Quillien** discusses the “sense of place” she experienced while spending three weeks in

the South Chinese city of Guangzhou (also known as Canton), located on the Pearl River. In this issue’s fourth essay, artist **Victoria King** considers how her sense of artistic creativity has shifted over time, partly because of maturing personal experience and partly because of changes in her lived geography and a deepening understanding of place.

Last this issue, architect **Gary Coates** presents an experiential analysis of a porch he designed for his Kansas home. He contrasts the bioclimatic requirements of this

porch design with the much different environmental and climatic requirements of the porch of the house in the Mid-Atlantic state of Maryland where he grew up.

*Below: One panel from artist Victoria King’s series, Channel Light, which relates to the place ambience of Tasmania’s Bruny Island. King describes the painting as an evocation of “the mesmerizing shimmer of the water of the d’Entrecasteaux Channel.” For other examples of King’s work, see her essay that begins on p. 23.*



## Comments from Readers

**John Billingsley** is Editor of *Northern Earth*, a journal focusing on such landscape and place topics as megalithic sites, alignments, and sacred landscapes (see his review of Christopher Tilley's *Interpreting Landscapes* on p. 9). He wrote the recent email in response to *EAP* Editor David Seamon's editorial on "open access" (fall 2015).

Dear David,

Good to read your editorial in the latest *EAP*. I share much of your ambivalence about the shift from paper to online. The greater availability of sources is a massive boon, but quality discernment still leaves a hankering for, say, the moniker of a respected publisher. But then, if such publishers are to survive, they must charge for what they publish.

As you say, the price of information in peer journals and their websites is punishing for non-academic researchers and threatens non-institutional research. From my perspective as a non-aligned researcher, I note that things have been getting further out of reach financially over the last 20 or more years.

For example, the cost of borrowing a book via the public library from an academic or British-Library source is rising, yet whatever the public library charges for an item, they cannot realistically charge what it actually costs them—£14–£16 per item, I believe it is now.

And with public libraries and museums being among the first targets for the local cutbacks demanded by the present government, and increasingly liable to permanent or partial closures, it's a tough ask.

So digital it is, though I find great reluctance to reading on-screen. It's better with a tablet, so I can squirm and loll about it my seat rather than sit at ergonomic attention at the desktop, but still!

—John Billingsley

## Items of interest

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the **Forum of Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality** (ACS) will be held June 23–26, 2016, in New Harmony, Indiana. The theme of the conference is "Utopia, Architecture, and Spirituality." The conference aim is "to look at utopia as an idea and ideal, real and

imagined, in all of its ramifications for architecture and the built environment, culture, politics, and, especially, spirituality. <http://www.acsforum.org/symposium2016/>.

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the **Interdisciplinary Coalition of North American Phenomenologists** (ICNAP) will take place May 26–30, 2016, on the downtown Phoenix campus of the University of Arizona. The theme of the conference is "Phenomenology and Sustainability: Interdisciplinary Inquiries in the Lifeworld of Persons, Communities, and the Natural World." [www.icnap.org](http://www.icnap.org).

The 2016 **International Human Science Research Conference** will be held at the University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, July 3–7. The Conference theme is "Life Phenomenology: Movement, Affect, and Language," but presentations on other topics are welcome. Keynote speakers include **David Abrams, Ralph Acampora, Scott Churchill, Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, and Stephen Smith.**

<http://function2flow.ca/home-7/welcome-to-the-35th-international-human-science-research-conference-ihsrsc-uottawa-july-3-7-2016>.

The 20<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the **International Association for Environmental Philosophy** (IAEP) will be held October 20–22, 2016, in Salt Lake City, Utah, immediately following the annual meetings of the **Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy** (SPEP) and **Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences** (SPHS). <http://environmentalphilosophy.org/>

A symposium, **Walking as a Method of Inquiry**, will be held July 8–10, 2016, on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Canada. Research topics include embodied pedagogies, landscape as "archive," and integration of artistic and intellectual modes of understanding. [info@4elementsivingarts.org](mailto:info@4elementsivingarts.org).

## Edward Relph reprint

Geographer **Edward Relph's** *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (1981) has been reprinted in Routledge Press's "Revival" series. Relph's central question is why modern human-made environments, while generally providing me-

chanical efficiency and material well-being, often invoke a sense of frustration and alienation rather than optimism and attachment.

Perhaps the book's most significant contribution is ethical and relates to what Relph calls *environmental humility*—a way of living in, being with, and encountering the world where by the "others" of that world, whether things, places, people, or other living beings, are respected just for being what they are and, therefore, are *put first and given kindly attention*.

Environmental humility involves "an appeal for guardianship, for taking care of things merely because they exist, for tending and protecting them. In this there is neither mastery nor subservience, but there is responsibility and commitment" (p. 187). See the sidebar below.

### "A sensitivity in seeing"

Environmental humility suggests a way out of the vicious circle of using ever more rational practices of management and planning to correct the destructive consequences of rationalistic management and too much planning.

It does this, first, by emphasizing the individuality of places, communities, and landscapes, for individuality is not susceptible to analysis and manipulation. It does this also by stressing the need for a sensitivity in seeing that can lead to the development of a compassionate intelligence that respects things and persons as they are.

And it does this, above all, by acknowledging appropriation, or the fact that everything has value simply by virtue of its existence and that human beings have an obligation to tend and care for things both non-human and human-made.

The use of appropriation and compassionate intelligence and individuality for making environments cannot be precisely delineated because that would reduce them to simplistic formulations like those of the rationalism to which they are deeply opposed. However, it is possible to suggest some of their general implications, for instance, places designed so that they are responsive to the needs of their most sensitive users, especially children and the elderly.

The further implications are more radical and suggest a complete restructuring of ways of designing and making buildings and landscapes so that there is no longer a dependence on specialist advice and techniques....

The likelihood of this actually happening is slight... Nonetheless, it is inconceivable that appropriation could have no effect on what is made and done because any deeply held and clearly thought out understanding must manifest itself in deeds and action.

Though environmental humility and its predecessors may never have attained expression on a large social scale, they do constitute ideals that are worth reiterating and adapting as social and environmental circumstances change.

In these ideals, there is no room for arrogance based on expertise or for authority stemming from some abstract conceptions of rights; there is equally no room for an unthinking subservience that abandons obligations to specialists; and there is no room for exploitation and unfeeling manipulation of either people or environments.

But there is scope for craftsmanship, for autonomy, for being responsible for the environments in which one lives and works... and for guardianship. Environmental humility is not easily practiced nor is it likely ever to achieve a wide-spread expression in landscapes. It is simply an ideal and a possibility worth contemplating (pp. 209–210).

## Citations Received

**Andreas Bernard, 2014. *Lifted: A Cultural History of the Elevator*. NY: New York Univ. Press [originally published in German in 2006].**

The central question asked by this journalist and cultural-studies theorist is “How much did elevators transform the vertical structure of buildings?” Bernard writes, “While the elevator may at first glance seem a modest innovation, it had wide-ranging effects from fundamentally restructuring building design to reinforcing social class hierarchies by moving luxury apartments to upper levels, previously the domain of the lower classes. The cramped elevator cabin itself served as a reflection

of life in modern, growing cities, as a space of simultaneous intimacy and anonymity, constantly in motion.”

**Gernot Böhme, Tonino Griffero, and Jean-Paul Thibaud, 2014. *Architecture and Atmosphere*. Espoo, Finland: Tapio Wirkkala Rut Bryk Foundation.**

In the last several years, the phenomenon of *atmosphere* has become a major link between phenomenological research and environmental design. The three essays comprising this volume are written by major figures in the “atmospheric” movement: philosophers **Gernot Böhme** (“Atmospheres: New Perspectives for Architecture and Design”) and **Tonino Griffero** (“Architectural Affordances: The Atmospheric Authority of Spaces”); and sociologist and urban planner **Jean-Paul Thibaud** (“Installing an Atmosphere”). The volume concludes with “A Conversation on Atmosphere,” involving discussion between the three authors and architect **Juhani Pallasmaa**. The sidebars below include a passage from Böhme’s chapter discussing the significance of atmosphere for architectural design; and Pallasmaa’s comments on atmosphere as a modernist blind spot.

### “What counts is how a person feels within a work of architecture....”

Seen from the theory of atmospheres, architecture is not a visual art.... [T]he main task of architecture is not the production of sight but of space—that is to say, spaces and location with a certain mood, i.e., atmospheres.

[The turn] is toward the question of how a building or a site is experienced by a visitor or an inhabitant. This is a turn to a new humanism—not the one we know from Vitruvius, the one in which a human being is the measure of everything via his body—but one in which everything, particularly architecture, is measured via bodily feelings.

What really counts... is how a person feels within a work of architecture or a neighborhood. From here, three maxims for architectural design follow:

1. Begin from inside, i.e., from the perspective of the future user or dweller.
2. Do not begin just with a design of the whole building but be aware of details from the very beginning.
3. Concentrate not on bodies but instead on space.

When saying that the main issue of architecture is space and not objects, I do not mean Euclidian space. The architect must always deal with geometry, but only in so far as he is a building engineer. The space considered here is the field of felt space—space as the *where* of bodily presence.

For the architect, a new self-understanding follows from the aesthetics of atmospheres. He is not primarily concerned with the shaping of bodies but with the structure and articulation of spaces. These spaces may be open or closed, they may be narrow or wide, they may be pressing or uplifting. Spaces may have a center and thus a directional orientation; they may fame sights or open to the indefinite.

When designing buildings, constructing bodies, and planning places and volumes, the architect at the same time sets “suggestions for movement”—actual movement as when he follows lines and surfaces with his eyes.

All these considerations mean that the architect when designing anticipates what sort of lived place he is constructing and how the future visitor or dweller will feel there (G. Böhme, pp. 10–12).

### Atmosphere as a modernist blind spot

... I would like to make some suggestions as to why the subject of atmosphere has remained such a blind spot for the architects of modernity and for our generation here. One reason is that architecture has been considered a visual art, while atmospheres are multi-sensory agglomerations of experience.

The second is that architecture has been conceived of as an art form of the focused eye, but... atmosphere is something far more vague fluid, and



almost indefinable. So it is not surprising that this subject has not fit within the modern conception of architecture.

Modernism has aimed at clarity, while atmosphere is unclear, diffuse, and often without edges. It is something that exists in an emergent rather than a finite state, whereas modernism has aspired to be both permanent and finite.

Modernism has been largely anti-material, the white-painted plaster surface being the ideal of modern architectural expression whereas dense atmospheric experience arises from distinct materiality—this materiality could be that of stone or brick, rain or fog.

Modernity resists tradition, whereas ambience and atmosphere often arise from a layering of things, particularly a sense of time and deterioration. These are qualities that have been all but erased from the modern conception of aesthetic ideas....

Last, I would add that some architects whose work I experience as strongly atmospheric have expressed an understanding, or at least an appreciation, of atmospheres in their writing. This suggests that the atmospheres present in the architectures of such figures as Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, or Sigurd Lewerentz are not accidental but the result of a particular orientation in their thinking and feeling.

Frank Lloyd Wright, for instance, wrote, “Whether people are conscious of it or not, they actually derive countenance and sustenance from the ‘atmosphere’ of the things they live in or with.”

The young Alvar Aalto wrote that “most people, but especially artists, principally grasp the emotional content in a work of art. This is especially manifest in the case of old architecture. We encounter there a mood so intense and downright intoxicating that in most cases we don’t pay a great deal of attention to individual parts and details, if we notice them at all” (J. Pallasmaa, pp. 66–67).

**Adrian Daub and Elisabeth Krimmer, eds., 2015. *Goethe Yearbook 22*. Rochester, New York: Boydell & Brewer.**

Published by the Goethe Society of North America, this edited collection “features a special section on Goethe and environmentalism,” edited by **Dalia Nassar** and **Luke Fischer**. Though many of the chapters appear to impose awkward post-structural interpretations on Goethe’s way of science (which is more accurately labeled a phenomenology of the natural world), there is at least one entry that highlights phenomenological possibilities—philosopher **Iris Hennigfeld**’s “Goethe as a Spiritual Predecessor of Phenomenology.”

**Joe L. Frost, 2010. *A History of Children’s Play and Play Environments*. NY: Routledge.**

This book provides “a history of children’s play and play environments.” It argues that today “we need to re-establish play as a priority” and “to preserve children’s free, spontaneous outdoor play... and natural and built play environments.”

**Sam Griffiths and Vinicius M. Netto, eds., 2015. “Open Syntaxes: Towards New Engagements with Social Sciences and Humanities,” special issue of *Journal of Space Syntax*, vol. 6, no. 1 (autumn).**

This special issue of *JOSS* includes several entries relevant to architectural and architectural phenomenology: “Phenomenology of the Movement Economy,” by **Lasse Suonperä Liebst**; “Roman Neighbourhoods: A Space Syntax View on Ancient City Quarters and Their Social Life,” by **Hanna Stöger**; “Making Sense of Historical Social Data,” by **Nadia Charalambous** and **Ilaria Geddes**; and “Understanding Place Holistically: Cities, Synergistic Relationality, and Space Syntax,” by **David Seamon**. <http://joss.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/>.

**Carmen Hass-Klau, 2015. *The Pedestrian and the City*. New York: Routledge.**

This urban planner overviews the design, policies, and politics of “walking and pedestrians.” Topics covered include “the

fight against urban motorways, the destruction of walkable neighborhoods through road building, the struggle of pedestrianization, and the popularity of traffic calming as a policy for reducing pedestrian accidents.” Real-world examples are drawn from 16 North American cities and ten other urban sites in Germany, Norway, Denmark, and Great Britain.

Hass-Klau writes: [This book is a] “declaration of commitment to the historic city centers, the traditional neighborhoods, not only the 19<sup>th</sup>-century ones but also those suburbs which for some were dreams of a better life.

“The destruction that has been inflicted on the urban structure is for me sometimes difficult to bear. Critics will say I am not a realist. I do not mind the criticism because I think we have had too much unreal ‘realism’ and we need more protectors, more people who are on the side of the weaker participants, and that no doubt includes the pedestrian who has very little influence and power to fight against inhuman changes....” (p. xix).

**George Home-Cook, 2015. *Theatre and Aural Attention*. London: Palgrave.**

“The question of attention in theatre remains relatively unexplored. In redressing this, *Theatre and Aural Attention* investigates what it is to attend theatre by means of listening.” The focus is on “four core aural phenomena in theatre—noise, designed sound, silence, and immersion.” The author concludes that “theatrical listening involves paying attention to atmospheres.”

**L. A. McNeur, 2008. “The Intimate Dance of Being, Building, Body and Psychotherapy,” *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 19–30.**

This architect and body psychotherapist considers the “interrelationships between emotions and environment... intrinsic to human existence.... The experience of the body moving through space and responding to the built environment on myriad levels simultaneously is an essential aspect of body psychotherapy.”

# Bernd Jager (1931–2015)

Phenomenological psychologist **Bernd Jager** died in Montreal on March 30, 2015, at the age of 83. Born in the Netherlands, Jager studied agronomy at the Royal Institute for Tropical Agriculture in Deventer and became an agricultural assistant in West Africa to **Albert Schweitzer**, whose kindness and intellectual acumen inspired Jager to study psychology, in which he earned a doctorate from Pittsburgh's Duquesne University in 1967. At the time, Duquesne was a world center of phenomenological research guided by such eminent phenomenological thinkers as **Erwin Strauss**, **J. H. van den Berg**, **Amedeo Giorgi**, and **Adrian van Kaam**, who was Jager's doctoral advisor.

Many of Jager's writings encompass important themes relevant to environmental and architectural phenomenology, including sensitive, extended interpretations of relevant lived polarities like dwelling/journey, mundaneness/festivity, and everydayness/extraordinariness. For a partial list of his writings and his essay, "Thresholds and Habitation," see *EAP*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 8–10. For a discussion of Jager's oeuvre and tributes to his memory, see the special "memorial issue" of the *Journal of Metabletica*, no. 10 (summer/autumn), 2015 ([metabletica@rogers.com](mailto:metabletica@rogers.com)).

In memoriam to Jager, we reprint passages from two of his most noteworthy writings:

- "Theorizing, Journeying, Dwelling," published in the second volume of *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology* (pp. 235–260), edited by **Amedeo Giorgi**, **Constance Fisher**, and **Edward Murray** (1975);
- "Theorizing the Elaboration of Place: Inquiry into Galileo and Freud," published in the fourth and last volume of *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology* (pp. 153–180), edited by **Amedeo Giorgi**, **Anthony Barton**, and **Charles Maes** (1983).

## Passages from "Theorizing, Journeying, Dwelling" (1975)

There appears to exist a persistent and deep interrelationship between the themes of intellectual, theoretical, or spiritual effort and those of traveling, exploration, and sight-seeing. The very language of intellectual effort constantly refers us to the road. Thus we are said to make *progress* in our science, that we *advance* to, or *arrive*, or are *on the way* to new insights, that we work *toward* a new understanding, attempt to *reach* new conclusions, or hope for a *breakthrough*, all the while *keeping up* with the work of others, hoping not to *fall behind*.

Western religious life often evokes the images of a road, albeit a difficult road, to be traversed as preparation for an eternal destination. The ideas of pilgrimage and crusade constantly reoccur in our religious sensibility.

A deeper understanding of the journey in its many manifestations as heroic quest, as religious pilgrimage, as diplomatic or commercial venture, as effort at conquest and annexation, as adventure or as tourism, all have bearing on a deeper understanding of our intellectual life.... (p. 235).

Thinking and journeying thrive on a few useful and incorruptible propositions and possessions. Thinking and

journeying start with a divestiture, with a ridding oneself of excess baggage. Closely linked with the ideal of simplicity and clarity is the ambition to hold oneself aloof from one's surroundings, to guard oneself from an all too ready and uncritical absorption of dominant values.

The first divestiture of thought and of travel is that of the comfort of being at one with one's surroundings, of sharing completely in the beliefs and ambitions of one's friends and neighbors. Thinking and journeying bring us estrangement. Thales, whose reputation reaches us indirectly through many legends and folk tales, appears to have spurned riches even though he once proved that he was clearly capable of amassing a fortune. He was quite obviously *disinterested* in the question for fame and money that totally absorbed his neighbors.

Of the same Thales, it is said that he lost his way to the market place in his hometown and that he fell in a ditch while studying the sky. In the numerous stories of this kind, the earliest Greek thinkers are portrayed as benevolent strangers who, despite their capacity for keen observations and their obvious intelligence, never seem to understand what everyone else appears to know. They remain different from everyone else (p. 240).

The journey is born out of a complex interaction of nearness and distance, intimacy and strangeness, of abundance and constraint. Journeying grows out of dwelling as dwelling is founded in journeying. The road and the hearth, journey and dwelling mutually imply each other. Neither can maintain its structural integrity without the other. The journey cut off from the sphere of dwelling becomes aimless wandering, it deteriorates into mere distraction or even chaos. . .

The journey requires a place of origin as the very background against which the figures of a new world can emerge. The hometown, the fatherland, the neighborhood, the parental home form together an organ of vision. To be without origin, to be homeless is to be blind.

On the other hand, the sphere of dwelling cannot maintain its vitality and viability without the renewal made possible by the path. A community without *outlook* atrophies, becomes decadent and incestuous. Incest is primarily this refusal of the path; it therefore is refusal of the future and a suicidal attempt to live entirely in the past. The sphere of dwelling, insofar as it is not moribund, is interpenetrated with journeying. . .

The beginning of a new enterprise requires a thoughtful remembrance of whatever supports that enterprise. Here, the first step forward is also a step backward. The traveler can leave behind only that which he has truly faced. Whatever is ignored will come to haunt him as unfinished business and complicate his progress. The traveler faces the ground and the past because it must support him. He equally must come into a heightened presence of whatever and whomever he is to leave behind so that he will receive full backing.... (pp. 249–50).

**T**he round world of dwelling offers a cyclical time, that is, the recurring times of seasons, of the cycles of birth and death, of planting and harvesting, of meeting and meeting again, of doing and doing over again. It offers a succession of crops, of duties, generations, forever appearing and reappearing. It offers a place where fragile objects and creatures can be

tended and cared for through constant, gentle reoccurring contacts.

Journeying forces [the] round generative world of [dwelling] into the narrow world of the path. The path offers the progressive time of unique and unrepeatable events, of singular occurrences, of strange peoples and places to be seen once and possibly never again.... Journeying breaks open the circle of the sun and the seasons and forms it into a linear pattern of succession in which the temporal world shrinks to a before and after, to backward and forward. Here the beginning is no longer felt to lie in the middle but instead appears placed behind one's back. the future makes its appearance straight ahead, making possible *confrontation* (p. 251).

**A** [crucial] facet of theoretical effort concerns the world of *festive initiative*, of coming forth, which is the apotheosis of seeing and showing. All the

great inspired works of literature, of the arts, of religious revelation, and the summit of scientific pursuits belong here. In this world of festive initiative, man sees through showing while he finds the courage to show forth through seeing. In this ecstatic realm of epiphany and parousia, man, world, and the gods achieve their closest approximation and their fullest visibility.

The theorist must soon turn, however, and begin his homeward journey. As soon as he turns to leave behind the epiphany to face the region where he started his journey, the theorist has begun the great hermeneutic task of mediating between the sacred and the profane, between the “here and now” and the depth, the height and the distance.

Homecoming is a hermeneutic task. *Interpretation* is itself a homecoming from the awesome and appealing distance (p. 260).

## Passages from “Theorizing the Elaboration of Place” (1983)

**T**he home, the factory, the hospital, the laboratory, the city [do not appear] in the first place as finished material things, as containers of people and their activities. Rather, these buildings themselves make their appearance as a certain embodied grasp on the world, as possible human stances, as particular manners of taking up the body and the world, as specific orientations disclosing certain aspects of a worldly horizon. The first architecture then appears to be that of taking up a particular bodily attitude. Architecture is then at first a certain manner of standing or sitting or lying down or walking.

The first logs, the first bricks are the trained limbs of agile bodies; the first foundations of the first building are a series of domesticated movements, of spontaneous bodily actions mastered in habit. Building is at first ritualized, routinized movement that allows a particular access to the world....

**I**n this view, architecture is a planning and building that codifies and solidifies a certain manner of “remaining nearby,” of dwelling or inhabiting. It follows the lead of the body, the accomplishment of habit and of stance.

It is only by thus taking up the melody of the body that architecture in its turn comes to influence the body, comes to accentuate a certain series of bodily possibilities within a certain type of room or building or city, while it relegates at the same time other possibilities in the background.

Thus it might be possible to organize a successful dinner party in a chemical laboratory or to have an intimate conversation in an airport, but to do so we must remain constantly detached from, or even in active opposition to, our architectural environment.

Like an accomplished choreography, a building shapes our movements and leads us to a certain outlook or assures us a certain grasp. A building is a codified dance, an insistent invitation to live our bodily being in

a certain manner. And we respond to this invitation by taking up a certain rhythm of walking and breathing, of digesting and thinking and feeling.

**T**o enter a building, to come under the sway of a choreography, means at the same time to become subject to a certain disclosure. Like a certain bodily attitude, a building opens a particular world of tasks, of outlooks, of sensibilities....

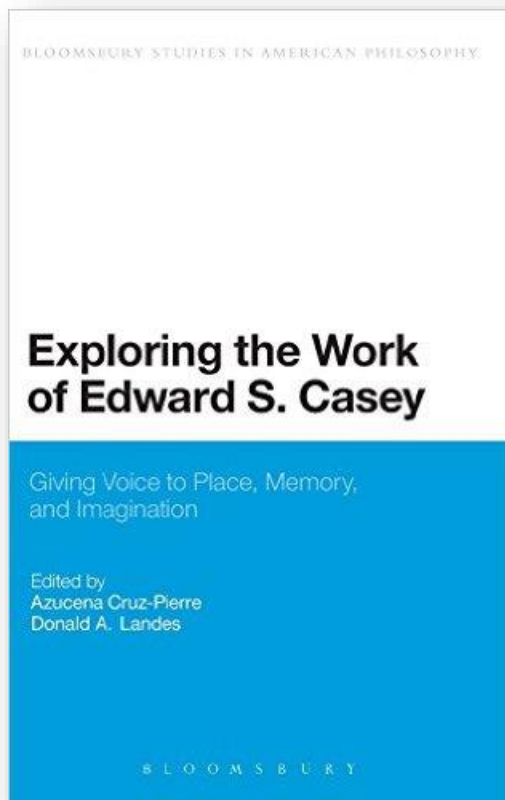
In this intimate alliance with the body, the building itself has become a particular access to the world. I no longer am contained within a thing-like construction, no longer remain within the building as one thing enclosed within another.

Rather, I have drawn this building into the sphere of my body. I have appropriated it and have drawn it around me like a coat on a windy day to inspect a certain sight or to face a particular task (pp. 154–156).



## Book Note

Azucena Cruz-Pierre and Donald A. Landes, eds., 2013. *Exploring the Work of Edward S. Casey*. London: Bloomsbury [paperback edition 2015].



In the winter 2015 *EAP*'s "citations received," we mentioned the publication of this edited collection of essays discussing the seminal work of phenomenological philosopher **Edward Casey**, well known for his superb phenomenological explications of place and related phenomena (e.g., *Getting Back into Place*, 2009; *The Fate of Place*, 1997).

At that time, we did not have access to the volume itself, which includes a series of three informative interviews with Casey conducted by the two editors, who both were doctoral students under his direction at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Here, we reprint a section, "moving into place," that is part of the third interview, entitled "The Reinscription of Place," conducted by co-editor **Azucena Cruz-Pierre** (ACP) on March 23, 2012.

**ACP:** In your essay "Between Geography and Philosophy" [*Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 2001], you treat Bourdieu's concept of habitus while also claiming that we need to consider the body/place relationship as more than merely socially determined, thus leading to the formation of a triad of terms for how the bodily self is engaged with place: habitus, habitation, idiolocality. First, I would like to ask how you came to use the term "idiolocality"?

**ESC:** I coined this term because I wanted to capture a sense of the local and then to combine and intensify this with the notion of the peculiar or the strange—as in *idios* in the Greek sense, which implies not only "private" but also "odd".... I wanted to get a sense of what is peculiar, eccentric, different, about a given place, so that would be the idiolocality or the idiolocality dimension of that place. It's as simple as that, but for this I needed a special term.

**ACP:** This helpful distinction continues to appear in your more recent work on borders. In that respect, I would like to see if we could further connect this triad with what you now say about borders and edges.

Typically, your accounts of place and of movement through space—whereby you claim we carry with us an evolving sense of self that arises out of our bodily experience of space and place—sound rather fluid and conducive to the postmodern nomadic lifestyles that more and more of us lead.

However, I would like to ask you what happens when, for instance, the undelimited horizontal boundaries that you posit are in fact limited borders. Here I think not only of the implantation of borders that close off a given landscape, reinscribing on the body-self the triad that you speak of, but also of

transplantation, whereby I move to a new region or place where the landscape appears foreign and perhaps "unnavigable" due to sociopolitical, physical, psychological, linguistic, or other factors, leaving one unable to integrate habitually, habitationally, and idiolocally into the new environment. Would this experience shift the balance of the inward permeation and outward expansion of place on the body?

**ESC:** You're quite right—all of those terms that you bring up, habitus, habitation, idiolocality, working in and through the body, are really a matter of flow, influx, outflux.

There is no neat model whereby to map them. Skin, as a breathing organism, is not only very permeable; it is itself an organ of the lived body. For me, it furnishes a kind of paradigm of what I call a "boundary," and so the body becomes a kind of operator in its lived environment, an agent that is not only effecting change in this environment, but equally changing and moving itself, and also taking in deeply, being influenced by its entire surroundings. It is often set back. It is not only inspired but also depressed, or frankly discouraged by its idiolocal world...

I don't want to imply that habitation, habitus, happen in some quasi-automatic way whereby the subject simply assimilates whatever it encounters, that all is well, and that all manner of things will be well. No, it isn't anywhere as easy as that. My analysis typically is about people who are *already* stationed in a place, dug in, having lived there for a long spell. The implaced bodies I treat are more sedentary than nomadic.

Why is that? I think I'm very close to Merleau-Ponty here—to his stance and sensibility that human creativity comes, or at least his kind of creativity came, from a deep immersion in a single setting. In his case, France, and more particularly Paris, very much as in Proust's case. People like Merleau-Ponty enjoyed a stability of landscape when they were growing up; it was always there for them, a persisting ground that served as a source of inspiration.

Their rootedness there via *habitus* and habitation allowed them to move beyond its limitations creatively: limitations of class, race, and ideology. This is distinct from coming into a new landscape where the challenges of learning a language, getting to the grocery store, getting acclimated and situated, can be painful and very awkward.

In this case, one stops short of *habitus*, short of habitation; in this circumstance, the idiolocality of the new place comes forward as something very conspicuous: “this is a strange place,” we say to ourselves. So the idiolocality of one’s circumstance is emphasized, whereas the *habitus* and habitation are only slowly acquired over many months and years—and sometimes never.

This is a spatiotemporal analysis of being more or less at home in one’s lifeworld. Here my question is likely to be: What is it like to be a body in a place you know quite well? So I prefer to begin with familiarity of place (or its cultivation), since for me, such familiarity is far from being constrictive; on the contrary, it may become a ground for freedom and creativity itself.

I’m thinking here of Stravinsky’s claim in *The Poetics of Music* that creativity takes place within the constraints of your own environment (including the formal constraints of a given musical genre).... A fortuitous event can change everything, even if you are not seeking it out: for instance, a fellowship to Paris that took me away from my then deepening roots in Chicago as a graduate student.

Here I indulge in personal idiosyncrasy, some of the vagaries of my own life mixed in with my preferred brand of phenomenology seen as on the lookout for forms of abiding connectionism. I privilege that which is well known by me and, more particularly, by my body (my *corps connaissant*, in Merleau-Ponty’s phrase).

I begin by knowing how to navigate my milieu, and only on this basis do I feel I am able to think as openly and as freely as I can. My habitual base, instead of choking or

chortling me (as it might for many), is actually the very road into becoming comparatively uninhibited in thought and writing.

I was teaching Merleau-Ponty only yesterday, and I came across some marvelous passages that I had never noticed before. In the body part in chapter one, where he says that bodily constraints are not only necessary to being human, but they’re actually a very good thing,, because without them we would have a false freedom, an artificial sense of volatility and flight.

The real task is to establish a hard-won freedom beginning from the constraints that you already possess and that are already *you*. With regard to familial, social, and cultural constraints, Merleau-Ponty says in effect “bring them on!” Short of being shackles, they can be a source of inspiration, or a place for the “respiration of living,” as he puts it in “Eye and Mind.” I think my sensibility gravitates in this direction—toward moving on to different paths to come by gaining a more profound understanding of where we now are. This is a freedom at the edge of our lives, or better *as* that very edge.

**ACP:** Given this bent, I can now see how you became so committed to discussing and promoting the idea of place, as opposed to joining the ranks of philosophers who continue promoting the concept of space as central to our experience of the world. You really had to promote place because you were yourself so much implaced wherever life took you.

**ESC:** I was (and am) a place-o-philiac. Place is at the very top of my list of intrinsically valuable dimensions at any given moment, right up there with people. For me, there is a serious competition going on here between people and places—which does not exclude their intimate relationship.

A volume of Santayana’s autobiography is called *Persons and Places*: this would be just the kind of balance that has held true of

my life. I don’t think it’s perverse, I don’t think it means I’m inhuman or de-personal, but just crediting place with its own virtues along with those of being human....

Let me come back to a final angle in your... question: how one moves from absolute novelty in the idiolocal to settled habitation. Here *habitus* is the middle term. It allows for the slow acquisition of reliable bodily postures and movements that themselves allow you to orient yourself in a new place.

So it isn’t just a visual or cartographic or verbal matter; it’s your body itself that has to begin to internalize the movements, the know-how, the *savoir-faire* of how you get from one place to another. As we tacitly map this region—knowing how to get to the butcher, or to the patisserie—*habitus* slowly builds a place-specific confidence in one’s orientation, and this is quite apart from explicit thoughts or emotions.

You can be dreadfully homesick, and yet your body is nevertheless drinking in that place slowly, imbibing it, creating a reliable reserve at the level of *habitus*, which seems to me to be the effective *tertium quid* between one’s dislocated cerebral and one’s emotional self and ongoing habitation. Habitation arrives fully when you can say to yourself, “Well, I’m feeling pretty much at home now” (or at least *much more* at home).

Idiolocality arises with your own first emotional and ideational takes, from being in an unaccustomed place, including one’s original home-place. From this emerges a slow amassment and internalization through the body in the form of habits and actions.

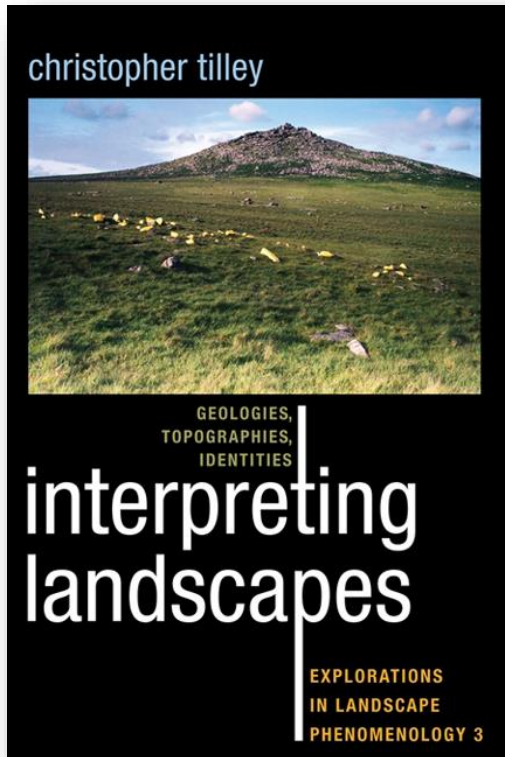
Habitation comes to crown this succession—when one is lucky enough for this to happen—and it implicates the entire lived body and the whole place in which you and the environment come into some form of compatibility, some type of collusion or even collaboration, though this is by no means always constructive or peaceful (pp. 187-90).



## Book Review

Christopher Tilley, 2012. *Interpreting Landscapes: Geologies, Topographies, Identities—Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology 3*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Reviewed by John Billingsley



British archaeologist Christopher Tilley seeks a kind of empathy with the past—not an archaeology of artifacts and sites so much as one of contexts and connections, embracing psychology rather than materialism. His workplace is not a laboratory, computer desk, or excavations, but a first-person immersion in the physical geography of prehistoric sites—contexts that demonstrate, perhaps more in Britain than elsewhere, that “no predictive model based on one landscape works for another” (p. 460). This claim means no grand schemes replicated as patterns across varying cultures but local monuments for local people with their own local priorities.

In this third volume of his “landscape phenomenology” series [see *EAP*, spring

2015], Tilley puts his approach into extensive practice, linking together various research projects that take the reader on a tour from Wessex to South West England, via the familiar landscapes of Stonehenge to the less-regarded barrows and cross-dykes to beach-pebbled hilltops, the sandstones and slates of Devon and Exmoor that evoked such different responses among site-builders, to Cornwall's granite environs that seem to have invoked a supernatural negotiation between land and people from the start.

As Tilley tours, he walks, looks, and reflects on what the site-builders might have seen and how they might have construed their surroundings into the visible traces they have left. This manner of interpretation is complemented by more customary archaeological reports with resulting deductions that are almost “Sherlock-Holms”-like.

What readers get, in other words, is a kind of guided walk around a large tract of South West England, with our attention directed not just to celebrated places like Stonehenge (which opens the volume and which, because of the intensity of research, may be more vulnerable to revision) and the comprehensive megalithic landscapes of Cornwall, but also to the kinds of sites that are so low-key and impassive that they are often overlooked by “megalith-maniacs.” Tilley argues, for example, that round barrows and cross-dykes—even Exmoor's intimate stone groupings—would have played a synthetic role in how their builders saw and interpreted (and re-interpreted) their homeland, in a creative matrix with the natural landscape.

Tilley contends that study of individual sites is of limited value because interaction is multi-layered: “Monuments and places

are within landscapes, but these landscapes are part of them... Past actions, events, myths and stories are embedded in landscapes” (p. 39). This claim introduces the element of human perception as another layer in the matrix, and in decoding it—or at least attempting to do so—the keywords are metaphor, mimesis and mnemonic.

### Water features & landscape

[One significant feature of the lived geography of prehistoric places is] water and water courses and coombes or dry valleys in terms of the manner in which they break up and divide the land but also bring it together, acting as both boundary and bridge.

Walking along these places in the landscape affords one a completely different [environmental] experience. In an area such as the Stonehenge landscape, one can walk along Stonehenge/Lake Bottom and hardly encounter a single barrow in a landscape filled with them.

On the northern edge of Cranborne Chase, the perspective is the same. Springs, confluences, valley and coombe heads are all significant places in relation to the locations of monuments in the chalk and pebble and sandstone and slate landscapes... as is the process of crossing wet or boggy areas....

Places where water collects, falling from the heavens and filling the solution basins of the high tors, were of great significance in the granite landscapes of Bodmin Moor and West Penwith. The coastline, a liminal zone between the sea and the land, was of great significance in relation to the location of monuments in South Dorset, East Devon, and West Penwith but appears to have been of little significance on Exmoor—at least in relation to the locations of the lithic monuments.

Part of the significance of the coast... was that it provided a place, sometimes

the only place, where a prehistoric “geologist” (cosmologist) could inspect the rocks, see what was under his or her feet. The coast is a place where the sun may be seen to either rise or set into the sea, die, and be reborn from a watery underworld.... Inland, the manner in which it rises and sets behind hills or monuments on auspicious days of the year, such as midsummer, the equinoxes, and midwinter [can also be an important feature for a site’s lived geography].

Coastal landforms have been the main point of departure for the study of monument location here, but in the future a subtle and more nuanced discussion might be developed in relation to the flows and directions of rivers into the sea, the tides, eddies, sand banks, and currents and their convergence, which have recently been shown to be of great significance in various ethnographic studies. A consideration of seascape, including its formation processes and chronology, needs to be developed to complement an understanding of landscapes.

The coast is, of course, significant in that it is here and usually only here that pebbles are found. Thus it is interesting to note that the two largest concentrations of Bronze Age round barrows in England occur on and in the vicinity of chalk hills capped with pebbles. Is this mere coincidence? It may well have been this particular geological combination of dramatically contrasting stones that was of special significance, as opposed to a landscape consisting solely of one kind of rock: chalk, granite, pebbles, sandstone, or slate (Tilly 2012, pp. 461-62).

As well as the temptation to see constructed places as individual entities, a common contemporary perceptual trap is to unconsciously imagine that the prehistoric landscape sprang fully formed into the hands of the mapmakers and didn’t take millennia of changing worldviews to evolve. The prehistoric environ is sequential, cumulative and self-referencing throughout history: a barrow, say, makes reference not only to the land and the society that constructs it but also to pre-existing remains perhaps produced by other societies with radically different worldviews. In short, one must picture and hope to understand an evolving palimpsest.

Another contemporary misperception of the prehistoric landscape is unconsciously to see it as it is today, whether in its wild state or in careful curation. In returning the human eye to the land, Tilley’s work countermands this reflective hiatus. His fieldwork is “feet-on” rather than “hands-on” and aims to return sites to the founders’ eyes. He attempts to locate insights that would otherwise be elusive “without personal physical experience and knowledge of place... impossible just using a map” (p. 100).

There are many fascinating inquiries in this book, and space allows just one example, involving the East Devon pebble beds—a natural curiosity in that riverine pebbles occur on hilltops. Metaphorically, this unlikely situation as an inversion of the natural order is as obvious today as it no doubt was in prehistory, but I suspect we may be less amenable today in seeing it as a meaningful basis for insight. Tilley, however, chases out an observation of color, sensory perception, nearby archaeological sites, archaeo-astronomy and mythological inference. In so doing the subtly visible landscape becomes the visionary landscape.

It is easy for empirical commentators to criticize Tilley’s method and conclusions, arguing that deduction about bygone perceptions in the absence of material evidence is immune to external verification and tan-

taunt to elevating imagination to research. Certainly, landscapes change, monuments decay, artifacts perish, and we have no quantifiable evidence on what symbolically motivated the construction of prehistoric sites.

Tilley argues, however, that one thing has not changed significantly over the last several thousand years—the human brain and its sense-making apparatus. If, therefore, human beings are sensitive to metaphor today, then they were also in prehistory. Thus, it is through engagement with metaphor that we might seek understanding of ritual landscapes. Indeed, the sigh of metaphor can be heard in the theorizing of a ceremonial route that led to the Stonehenge Riverside Project’s discovery of a previously unknown henge between Stonehenge and the River Avon.

For many researchers, metaphor has less empirical quantifiability than the wind, and the only understanding of human relationship with place to be trusted is one constructed on solid foundations. In this sense, one might say that Tilley’s phenomenological approach in archaeology offers a homeopathic antidote to empiricist sterility. His method is a horizontal engagement as contrasted with the vertical, layered approach of excavation. His method is also mobile and itinerant rather than static—negotiation rather than investigation, thereby invoking a dialectical socio-political inference. These “horizontal” and “vertical” approaches are complementary, not competitive, and each better with an ear inclined to the other.

Tilley’s interpretations of how ancient sites pattern the landscape and what that patterning might imply for lifeworlds not only sheds light on the past but also implicitly illuminates how we see our world today. What is *sine qua non* is presence.

Billingsley is Editor of *Northern Earth*, a quarterly journal focusing on such topics as megalithic sites and sacred landscapes. [www.northernearth.co.uk](http://www.northernearth.co.uk).

# Several Thematic Aspects of *EAP*

Dylan Trigg

**Trigg** is a Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellow at the University of Memphis, Department of Philosophy; and at University College Dublin, School of Philosophy. His research interests include phenomenology and existentialism; philosophies of subjectivity and embodiment; aesthetics and philosophies of art; and philosophies of space and place. Trigg's books include: *Topophobia: A Phenomenology of Anxiety* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); *The Thing: A Phenomenology of Horror* (Washington, DC: Zero Books, 2014); and *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012).

Trigg was an invited speaker at a special session in honor of "25 years of *EAP*" held at the annual conference of the International Association of Environmental Philosophy (IAEP), Atlanta, Georgia USA, October 11, 2015. The following commentary is a print revision of his spoken remarks. [djtrigg@memphis.edu](mailto:djtrigg@memphis.edu). © 2016 Dylan Trigg.

I am happy to be able to say a few words about David Seamon's work and the legacy of *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*.

If I may, a few biographical words to begin with. When I was a graduate student at the University of Sussex almost ten years ago, I got in touch with David, having then recently discovered *EAP*. My graduate thesis was on the relation between memory and place, and one aspect of this research concerned the memorable quality of places such as Starbucks.

I wrote to David to express my enthusiasm for *EAP* and to query whether he might be interested in running the Starbucks piece. He said yes. This was a thrill, but it was also a thrill to enter into a correspondence with David. Indeed, I'll always be grateful to him for his intellectual generosity and honesty during that time, which was very much welcome.

This is also clear enough in the very first issue of *EAP*, where David invites his then incipient readers to share their own first-hand experience of themes pertinent to *EAP*, not only in the form of academic papers, but also by way of poems, letters, drawings, and any other expressive format.

Certainly, such openness is not a given of academic life. Philosophy arguably needs more of this. Having then met David in person, during an EAP/IAEP session in Chicago, 2007, and then on several other occasions—most recently last month in Rome of all

places—I was happy to discover that presence I had of David in his email—witty, biting, somewhat caustic but also kind and warm—also followed through in person.

Around the same time I first contacted David, I was at Duquesne University as a visiting scholar and discovered, within the windowless basement of the library, the archives of *EAP* housed in the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center. This was, of course, prior to the online access of *EAP*. For me, this was a fortuitous discovery. I

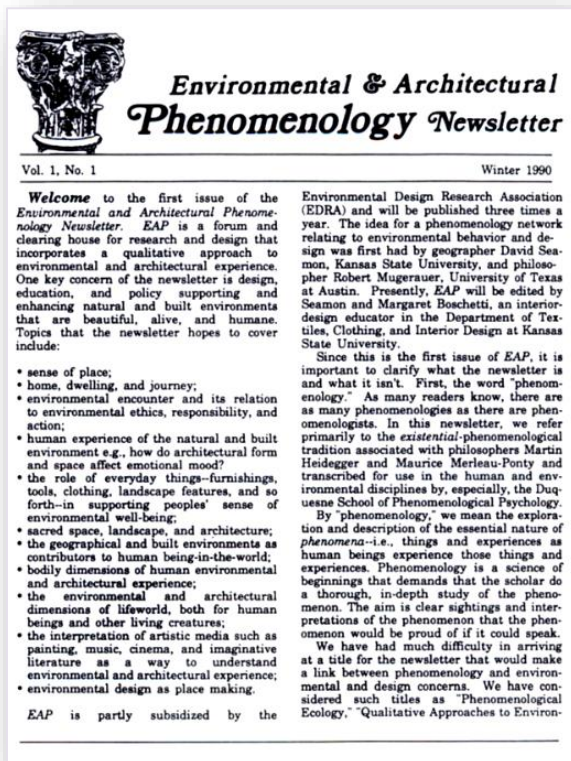
spent many happy days working through the *EAP* issues.

Now is not the time to recount the chronicles of *EAP*, which now span 25 years. But if I may, I'd like to single out several thematic aspects of *EAP* that reflect both David's singular commitment to the intersection between phenomenology and architecture together with a set of themes that have proven to be central to the field of research more broadly.

## Human Experience

Human experience is a theme that runs throughout *EAP* from its inception to its latest issue. The motivation is governed by an approach toward architecture, not as the site of an abstract or academic discipline, but as the foundation in and through which human experience is shaped. Sifting through the archives of *EAP*, as I have done in preparation for this meeting, I'm reminded of the sheer richness of these themes, as they are articulated time and again in innumerable ways.

Already in the second issue of *EAP*, from spring, 1990, we have a consummate expression of the literally earth-shattering meaning central to the rapport between human experience and architecture in the form of phenomenologist Elizabeth Behnke's reflections on the lived experience of an earthquake. If I may, I'd like to quote a section of Behnke's ar-





ticle, which reveals the fluid interplay between architecture, place, and bodily experience:

*When the earthquake struck, I was at home—a rented cabin in a redwood canyon in the Santa Cruz Mountains a few miles from the epicenter of the quake. When I think back to the event itself, one thing that strikes me is that the world shook as a whole. There was no sense that a geological object, “the earth,” was shaking and, therefore, “causing” other objects “on” the earth to move about violently and erratically. Instead, everything—houses, cars, trees, people, rocks, dirt, water, structures, driveways, and so on—was shaken together by a strong vertical juddering and jolting. The “whole place” shook.*

Behnke reminds us of the fragile nexus between human life and our surroundings. Our “place” in the world does not consist of being objectively situated against a static backdrop. Nor is architecture an innocuous set of spatial forms tied together in a discrete, autonomous way. Our existence in the world, as Behnke demonstrates, is both local and global at once. To be in the midst of an earthquake is to be confronted with the contingency of much that is ostensibly solid and grounded in our waking lives.

Of course, it sometimes takes an event such as an earthquake to forcefully remind us of the often precarious ways in which we are placed in the world. Behnke ends her reflections by asking whether or not phenomenology itself can produce a series of minor earthquakes within us, without risking our lives.

She ends, rightly in my estimation, by considering to what extent an outlet such as *EAP* can provide a source of education and encouragement for being more mindful of the ways in which human experience is mediated and affected by our rapport with the built and sometimes unbuilt world. As she explains,

*Perhaps the kind of research an organization like the Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology Network is meant to encourage can help us to achieve some lucidity about lived place, about the interplay of built word and terrestrial environment, about dwelling wisely on such an earth, without needing this earth to shake us up in order to get our attention.*

## The Body

Just as Behnke’s world is shattered, so it recovers, and it does so thanks to the ability of the body to reorganize the world. Tied up, indeed central, to the focus on environmental and architectural experience is the role the body plays. Reading through *EAP*, we find countless illustrations and insights that reveal the profound centrality of the

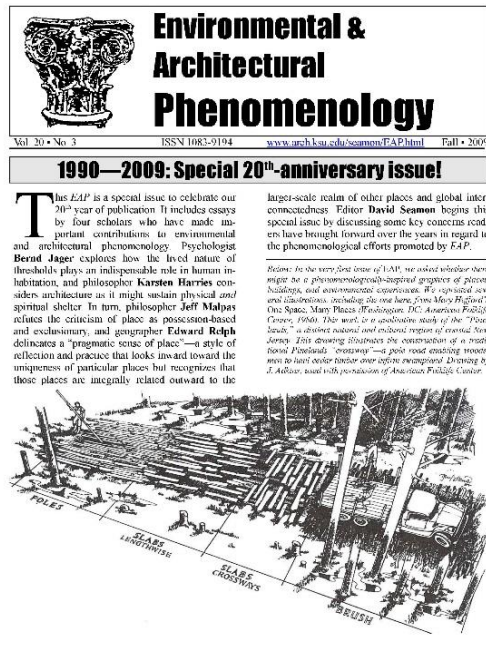
Way of the Body,” describes how an accident involving her wheelchair left her not only with physical injuries but also, more critically, with invisible injuries marked by an “immediate, and all encompassing, uncontrollable terror of being in my wheelchair”:

*My accident severed my moorings in space. I felt adrift in a completely unpredictable and terrifyingly unstable environment. I might, for example, be seated motionless at my desk with eyes focused on the computer screen in front of me when a sudden, inexplicable shift of bodily position would initiate the visual, auditory, tactile, and visceral sensations of catapulting backward toward the ground.*

As phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty revealed, far from a container that transports us from one point in space to another, the body is the means through which our existence in the world is expressed. We have a clear sense of this in Toombs’ depiction of bodily instability. As the body is put into doubt, so it affects and shapes our experience of the environment itself. Alongside the body, the world becomes unpredictable and hazardous.

Critically, in the descriptions offered by Toombs, we are reminded, often urgently, that for each of us there is a specific world. The ill body comports itself in a particular way and finds therein a specific world defined in its rapport with the body. For each of us, there is a particular world—a world often overlooked thanks to the stubbornness of our habits and the ease with which we fall back into the natural attitude.

Writings like Toombs’ are needed to restore our awareness, and also our compassion that there exist other ways of being-in-the-world. More than this, the accidents and ruptures we encounter in life, far from being self-contained, instead redefine our relation to even the most secure of places, namely the home. Toombs continues:



body in the formation of our felt experience of spatiality. Let me cite one especially striking example: philosopher Kay Toombs’ very fine and often moving reflection on bodily illness from the Spring 1997 issue of *EAP*.

Toombs suffers from multiple sclerosis, and as a result must now use a wheelchair for mobility. Toombs’ article, “Illness as a

*Instead of being at home in a relatively safe and predictable landscape that I had learned successfully to negotiate in my wheelchair, I now felt constantly endangered by my hostile surroundings. Flat surfaces menaced since they concealed hidden obstacles, modest curb cuts were breathtakingly steep (so much so that just imagining wheeling up the ramp literally took my breath away). Uneven surfaces were inherently treacherous. Indeed, so ominous was the surrounding world that I found it impossible to venture outside the house in my wheelchair.*

## The Everyday

Alongside drawing our attention to the fragile nature of our being-in-the-world, *EAP* also reflects upon a certain felicitous nature of space taken up in the everyday. Indeed, one of the reasons that I was so excited when I first encountered *EAP* was because of its thematic richness and its commitment to actual experiences of places. This continues to foster my commitment to phenomenology and to my admiration for *EAP* more broadly.

As I see it, one of phenomenology's merits is to attend to the everyday, all too often overlooked. Phenomenology, in its best moments, renews our relation to the everyday. It is a method concerned with cultivating a sensitivity toward place. Phenomenology is a method that can become educational in the best sense of the term, not as a prescriptive set of instructions but as a capacity to restore the meaning of our lived relations with the world. Throughout *EAP* issues, we find a wealth of illustrations that underscore the lived meaning of the everyday. Elevators, homes, walls, office space, public space, private space, the space of the cyclist, rural space, urban space, preschool space, shopping malls, the space opened up by a radio, remote space, close space, islands, cities, virtual spaces, authentic spaces, the space of steps, cosmic space, secular space, and finally, Starbucks. All these and more fill the pages of *EAP*.

In the latest edition of *EAP*, an exemplary illustration of this commitment to the

everyday is offered by architect R.M. Sovich in his Bachelardian exploration of the doors and passages in care homes. He writes:

*One "reads" a door with the entire body. Who has not come upon a door with a push sign when to the contrary the door and handle clearly say "pull"? Many of us have experienced feelings of hesitation at doorways, particularly at the threshold of a patient's room."*

We are fortunate, I think, to have an outlet for this kind of thinking, all too often overlooked by philosophical research that privileges the abstract over the concrete. The marginal and the liminal, the transitory and the ephemeral, far from being insignificant to our lived experience, instead reveal themselves, time and again, as the inextricable fabric in which our complex relations with the world and others are manifest.

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**1990–2014: Special 25<sup>th</sup>-anniversary issue!**

**T**his *EAP* celebrates 25 years of publication. In early spring, *EAP* editor David Seamon sent out invitations to contribute an essay for a special fall issue. In response, Seamon received the 19 entries that follow. To accommodate this issue's length as a paper copy, we have used a triple-column, ten-point format. The digital version remains in the usual two-column, 12-point format.

In his introduction to this anniversary issue, Seamon reproduces the list of potential questions that he suggested contributors might address (see p. 4). Though few of the entries answer these questions directly, our notes that they underline many of the authors' concerns and serve as pointers toward important matters that may mark the future of environmental and architectural phenomenology.

One of these matters is the impact of digital information, hyperspace, and virtual reality on real-world places, life, and events. This concern affects *EAP* immediately, since **this will be the last paper issue**—production and especially postage costs have become too much to bear. As readers know, *EAP* is already available in an open-source digital version. With the elimination of paper copies, we will no longer send out a subscription request in fall issues. In lieu of subscriptions, we ask that readers make a donation for whatever amount they feel *EAP* is worth (see back page), since we still have production expenses.

We thank those readers who have supported *EAP* over the last 25 years. At its peak, in the late 1990s, our subscription list reached 150. Since open access, however, our paid readership has plummeted: in 2014, we received subscriptions from only 41 individuals and ten academic libraries. Though this loss in subscribership is discouraging, there is an encouraging side too. Since it became open source, *EAP* has been seen by many more readers than paper copies could generate. For example, (cont. on p. 7)

*Teaser: Ecological Backyard—Panel 3, 66 x 21 cm, 2014. This painting by artist Sue Michael pictures a backyard in Boulder County, a small, two-story house with a red roof. Note how inside and outside intersect, a view of nature. Michael discusses in her essay, p. 11. For panels 1 & 2, see back page.*

## Critical inquiry

For all its attraction to felicitous instances of dwelling, *EAP* has always been mindful of its critics. Perhaps the sheer survival of *EAP* in these uncertain times is due, not to

an insularity, but to an awareness of other traditions and what they may offer in terms of critical engagement with the phenomenological framework central to *EAP*'s mission.

For example, one thinks of geographer Edward Relph, a central figure in David's work and in *EAP* itself. David's reflections on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (1976) are worth returning to as they afford a space to reflect upon criticisms directed not simply to Relph's work but to the phenomenological enterprise itself.

These criticisms tend to phrase phenomenology as inward looking, relativistic, conservative, and abstracted from broader social and political concerns. By way of his defense of Relph's book, David doesn't suggest a series of already formed and neatly compacted answers to the problems facing phenomenology, but he does reveal that phenomenology is more porous, more open, and more mediated by political and cultural dimensions that are often misunderstood or overlooked by its critics.

Moreover, beyond these criticisms, and no matter what intellectual currents confront us, we are, as David reminds us, always already placed in the world:

*Regardless of the historical time or the geographical, technological, and social situation, people will always need place because having a place and identifying with place are integral to what and who we are as human beings.*

*EAP* continues to be a valuable if not invaluable source of both research and inspiration for those working in phenomenology, architecture, environmental studies, and human geography.

Thanks to David's generosity and to his on-going work, these resources are now available on-line for future generations to discover. I thank David personally for establishing *EAP*, for his lived commitment to the field of architectural and environmental phenomenology, and for his friendship.

# Moving: Remaking a Lifeworld

Stephen Wood

*Wood is an independent researcher in phenomenology and the environment. He studied systematic zoology at the University of Cambridge and has held an honorary fellowship in the Theoretical Physics Research Unit at Birbeck College, London. Wood and his wife recently purchased their first house, and this essay points toward a “first-person phenomenology of moving and making a new home.” [s.w.wood.88@cantab.net](mailto:s.w.wood.88@cantab.net). © 2016 Stephen Wood.*

In this essay, I explore a personal experience of moving to a new house. I highlight several themes, including horizontality and verticality; loss and unavailability; action space and wayfinding; and comfortableness and anxiety.

These themes mark the challenge of making a new home and draw on parallel experiences of inhabiting, moving, and home-making in my childhood and at university. The childhood home provides a primordial background—the home made for me in the deeply personal context of family. The experience of university accommodation, designed for its functional anonymity, made me aware for the first time of the demands of making a home in the public world.

## The Prospect of Change

As I write at the end of September, my wife and I are still living in our old apartment, while friends carry out work in the new house, primarily on the kitchen and living room. Yesterday, my wife and I went to visit after the workers had left for the day. I felt disgust at the sight of the kitchen wall revealed by the removal of the old kitchen cabinets—the badly designed plumbing, the remnants of former installations, and gaping holes in the brickwork.

There were moments of tenderness in front of what would be our new bedroom. I felt overwhelmed by the beauty of the study, with its high ceiling and window onto garden greenery. I had lived so long in apartments—my sense of self limited to one or sometimes one-and-a-half levels—that I had lost hope in ever owning a house and returning to a primordial architectural sense of up/down and in/out.

It was all too much. I felt claustrophobic and panicked. I had to get out. My wife quickly opened the front door, and I gladly drew breath in the open yard. What was going on? After some reflection, it struck me

that I was experiencing a change as profound as leaving home, where I traded my four-story family house for a student room, but now in reverse. Here, I was moving from a one-floor apartment to a two-story house with garden and garage.

I could go up to bed again, come down for breakfast, sit and discuss the day at the kitchen table. My wife would be able to watch TV while I studied upstairs, or I could watch a late film while she went to bed. She could study and listen to my piano playing filtering up through the floorboards, reassured that I am “around,” even if not directly with her. She would be able to telephone her family, knowing that I could no longer hear her. We would be able to respect each other’s privacy and freedom yet remain united in the solidarity of the shared house.

## My Childhood Home

There were a number of ways that directions impregnated our habitual way of speaking when I was growing up in our Georgian house in Bath:

- Going up, particularly to sleep: “Going up to bed.” “Has he gone up yet?” “I thought you’d gone up.”
- Coming down, particularly to eat: “She hasn’t come down to breakfast yet?” “Tell them to come down, dinner’s ready.”
- Going outside: “There’s sunshine, I’m going out.” “He’s gone out to play.” “Have you taken the washing out?”

I experienced “up” as a direction toward safety and freedom. My eldest sister’s attic room had a small black-and-white television. After she left home for good, I would stay up late watching TV. This space became my private working area, where I conjured up fantasies of life on other planets.

“Down” was lived as a direction toward sharing, sitting around the kitchen table, and talking over events in the world outside. At

the end of the day, my dad would come home and warm his hands on the kitchen radiator. I particularly remember his return early on Fridays. The hand-warming ritual was a way to leave the week of work behind and reconnect with domestic comforts. When they returned home from university, my sisters would sit with my mother at the kitchen table and discuss their lives. I would come down to talk, while my mother prepared dinner. This was an important daily event—to share and debrief, to make sense of what had happened during the day.

I remember feeling happy and reassured in our house, knowing that other family members were there too, going about their usual business. The spatial separations made possible by the house—its division into different floors and rooms—allowed each family member to have his or her space but to retain a feeling of solidarity.

In contrast, the bedrooms in English 16<sup>th</sup>-century houses were all connected and not private places (Worsley 2012, 11). The master and his wife would have their servants sleeping next to them in the same room. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the private middle-class bedroom emerged partly because of the Georgian housing boom. These houses incorporated corridors, stairwells, and circulation spaces. Each bedroom was accessed independently through its own door. Servants were banished to the attic or the basement. The master and his wife would summon them either with a hand bell or through a system of wires that rang a bell in their quarters. When we moved into our Georgian home in Bath, the brass wires were still in place, together with the bells downstairs.

## Leaving Home

When I left home for Cambridge University’s oldest and smallest undergraduate college, Peterhouse, I lived in a 1960s tower



block, William Stone Building. I found myself in a single room with two floormates. I went up to bed, since I was on the top floor, but I did not come up from anywhere that was part of my lived space. I could not descend to discuss my day with family. There was no “down” to go to. The building’s floors were so nearly identical that one time I was puzzled when my key did not work in “my” door. I pushed it open, surprised to find the young woman who lived in the room below me, sitting at her desk.

I had my own room, but it was not permeable. Other than a bathroom, there were no natural liaisons with other necessary functions and interactions. There was the dining hall, the laundry, the music room, and the common room. Each of these functions was housed in a different building—the dining room in the mediaeval hall; the common room in a corner staircase in the old First Court; the laundry in the basement of the modern Fen Court; and the music room tucked away in a nondescript building behind the library. Each room had a different resonance and lacked the unified logic of a house. The beautiful gardens and paths connecting these rooms could not overcome a disjointed feeling. I moved from one outside to another, without being able to stay inside.

What of my room, the extent of my inside? Orange curtains and orange bed covers. Orange curtains. White walls. A sink. Bookshelves. A thermostat. Clean, modern, functional, soulless. Difficult to appropriate and lacking in natural charm that might draw one into relationship. Only the garden view provided some beauty but from afar.

When I first visited Peterhouse, students offered a tour and explained how the staircase was important, creating a meeting place around the kitchen facilities located there. In fact, they referred to staircases not in William Stone but in the college’s old part. The tiny kitchen on my floor was a potential meeting place for only me and my two floormates, with whom I shared very little. This limited kitchen arrangement did not promote the mixing and serendipitous meetings among a large enough population that might generate an attachment to the place.

In addition, cooking regulations were strict. Frying and toasters were banned. There was no oven, just an electric, two-ring stove that took ages to heat. It would be difficult to cook a real meal. More typical food

preparation was heating milk, boiling water for pot noodles, making a quick plate of baked beans or macaroni and cheese. We students were unlikely to have an enriching exchange of culinary tips or to linger for an extended time to get to know each other.

On the old staircases, in contrast, the kitchen area was on a landing between floors. Going up to the kitchen, you would meet fellow housemates coming down. Vertical movement brought people together—a natural flow of walking, climbing, or leaping two steps at a time. The body’s stair rhythm would communicate something of the person’s state of mind—energy level, enthusiasm, distress, or good humor. The kitchen was a place of meeting and sharing between residents from different floors. The kitchens of William Stone, in contrast, were for residents of each floor only, and any communication the kitchens generated was horizontal only. Vertical communication was relegated to the elevator, which mostly offered fleeting, casual meetings.

Overall, the fragmented, floor-segregated architecture of William Stone reduced and fractured interpersonal encounter and engagement. My sense of self shrank from the characterful, four-story house in which I had grown up to a single, anonymous room.

### Verticality

According to philosopher Gaston Bachelard, the chief benefit of a house is that it “shelters day dreaming, ... protects the dreamer, [and] ... allows one to dream in peace” (Bachelard 1994, 6).

A good house gives our most intimate feelings and memories a lodging, and “if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated. All our lives we come back to them in our daydreams” (8).

If a house is sufficiently elaborate in its vertical dimension (“ensured by the polarity of cellar and attic” [17]) and sufficiently enriched with “nooks and corners of solitude” (50), it will allow us to dream. The roof, Bachelard contends, allows our thoughts to be clear, protecting us from threatening, inclement weather. The cellar, in its darkness, takes us out of thought to “the irrationality of the depths” (18).

For Bachelard, to truly dwell is to dwell in the imagination, in poetry, and in dreams.

The modern city and its technology tends to obliterate this poetic dimension, and thus to hinder the ability to dwell:

*In Paris, there are no houses, and the inhabitants of the big city live in superimposed boxes.... Our abode has neither space around it nor verticality inside it.... They have no roofs and, what is quite unthinkable for a dreamer of houses, sky-scrapers have no cellars. From the street to the roof, the rooms pile up one on top of the other, while the tent of a horizonless sky encloses the entire city.*

*But the height of city buildings is a purely exterior one. Elevators do away with... stair climbing so that there is no longer any virtue in living up near the sky. Home has become mere horizontality. The different rooms that compose living quarters jammed into one floor all lack one of the fundamental principles for distinguishing and classifying the values of intimacy (26-27).*

In this description of a Parisian apartment block, Bachelard echoes my experience of William Stone Building. I lived in a “box” superimposed on top of other boxes. The elevator took away the sense of climbing stairs, with their metaphor of “ascension to a more tranquil solitude” (25). The whole arrangement in its horizontality undermined the possibility of lodging memories and inviting dreams. The building was little more than functional technology. Much different was the rich verticality of my family’s house that encouraged a poetic inhabitation—ascending to solitude and to flights of imagination via bedroom and attic; descending to eat, talk, and laugh at the kitchen table. This architecture encouraged a poetic inhabitation, a truer dwelling.

### Missing the “Phantom” Sofa

We returned to our former apartment to fetch more of our possessions. My wife was in the study where we had not been able to sort out the desk in time for the removal men. She was going through desk contents, so I went to the sitting room to wait for her to finish. As I entered, I was surprised to realize that the room was now empty of furniture, including the sofa on which I had planned to sit. I had entered the objective space of this room but I had not registered the change in phenomenal space.

On one level, I was still inhabiting that objective space as if nothing had shifted. The movers' "amputation" of the phenomenal space had left a "phantom" sitting room with a "phantom" sofa. The room still belonged to my extended phenomenal body, existing in its former relation to the sofa that provided a comfortable waiting place, since it faced the window and pleasing views of trees. Except the sofa was not there.

To use philosopher Martin Heidegger's term, the sofa was *unavailable* (Dreyfus 1991). Given that it was missing from its former place, it was *obtrusively* unavailable, making its presence felt by its absence (79). When things are readily available, they fit without notice into our lifeworld. When I am transparently absorbed in living in my home, sitting, working, walking between rooms, I am simply going about my business and not aware of carrying out any of these actions. Faced, however, with a sofa that is not there, I emerge as a subject who stands at a loss and helpless, wondering why what he expected is not there.

### The Kitchen's Action Space

As I began to use our new kitchen, I found I would keep opening the cupboard to the right of the cooking range, looking for utensils and recipe ingredients. In our former kitchen, we had a similar cupboard space that stored saucepans and dishes as well as oil, vinegar, and the like. In the old kitchen, I reached instinctively toward this cupboard most often, and so at first this is where I reached in the new kitchen, even though these items were now in cupboards to the left of the stove.

This cupboard situation is another example of Heidegger's unavailability, in that the new kitchen's placement of utensils, dishes, and so forth disrupt habitual actions that, in the old kitchen, had been second nature. Unavailability relates to the integration of equipment in a system of meaningful relations, together with one's own lived comportment in that system. In learning to inhabit the new but unfamiliar kitchen, I find myself acting deliberately to overcome "obstinate" equipment "refusing" to be in the "right" place (Dreyfus 1991, 72).

If the tools I need are conveniently organized and ready-to-hand, I am transparently absorbed in my activity. My movements are fluid and spontaneous with the given space

of action. My body is the expression of the action space, the sedimentation of repeated gestures and experiences confirmed by that context over time (Simms 2008, 42). In the new kitchen, I find myself at first expressing the gestures appropriate to the old kitchen. Via continuing use, however, I learn to inhabit the new space.

Importantly, it is possible to accelerate this learning process through thoughtful, experience-informed design. One example is the studies of kitchen layouts by the University of Illinois's Building Research Council (BRC 1993). The empirical evidence for their design recommendations comes from time-motion and traversal studies. This research group has identified significant kitchen "centers" linked by "lines of force" along most frequently traversed paths between those centers. Centers connected by frequently traversed paths should be placed close together so as to invite and support appropriate kitchen actions: "Arrange the work centers to reduce the amount of walking in the kitchen and to allow work to flow easily from one center to another" (BRC 1993, 7).

According to these researchers, the modern kitchen typically incorporates four main centers: refrigerator, sink, food preparation, and cooking range (BRC, 1993, p. 7). Users make the most traversals between sink and range, followed by preparation to sink and preparation to refrigerator. For a right-handed person, the ideal kitchen layout (from user's right to left) is refrigerator, food preparation, sink, and range, with counter space between each.

The kitchen in our new house incorporates a variation on the BRC recommendations—viz., refrigerator, sink, food preparation, and range. When preparing a meal, I feel the relation between refrigerator and sink, as I take out vegetables to wash. Next, I move from sink to preparation center (to chop vegetables) and then to range (to start their boiling). In terms of everyday use, the kitchen is not an objective space but a phenomenal field that draws me into my habitual activities. The user is involved in a system of relations oriented around actions and activities. As activities shift, the relations shift (Merleau-Ponty 1963, 168).

### Making Phenomenal Space

In our two-story house, I cannot always fetch things quickly because they may be on the other floor. Going to the bathroom, for example, means going upstairs. In our old apartment, spaces I might have wished separate were always together, whereas, in the new house, spaces I might wish together are apart, on different floors, or perhaps outside, in the garage. My sense of dwelling space still mostly confines itself to the floor on which I find myself; the floor I am not on or the garage I am not in seem as "other" spaces. In this sense, my phenomenal self does not yet fully embrace the whole of the new house, though no doubt it will in time as I involve myself in practical actions like locating luggage stored in the garage, fetching a coat from the walk-in closet, or even going to the bathroom. Via lived experience, I begin to identify with these places, and my sense of phenomenal self expands.

Through repeated interactions, an objective space is transformed into a phenomenal space transparently available. A house becomes a home that is part of us and our phenomenal bodies. Repetitive actions and interactions establish taken-for-granted links between person and place. Through everyday actions like cooking, watching TV, or fetching things from the garage, person and place become interwoven and inseparable. In everyday experience, place is transparently available to users, who in turn are unself-consciously identified with and taken up by place via their emplaced bodies.

### Finding a Comfortable Nook

It is the end of November and the study is still unavailable. Our two sofas are arranged correctly, each facing a window. We have placed our wooden table in the middle of the room and desk and small bookcase in opposite corners. But there are cardboard boxes everywhere, making the room seem like a storage area, a situation that intrudes on our appropriating this space. A pity, for it is the most beautiful room in the house. The need for a library and space of quiet study is not yet being met, and the house feels poorer for it. We are missing a place for creation, reflection, and the separation of activities for which we had originally wished.

Now, the day after Christmas, I finally can work in my study. The table with two

chairs is now sittable. We have moved the wireless modem upstairs, where we now watch programs streamed over the internet. The bookcases are in place and books unpacked. At last, I have a permanent place to study and write—where I can leave out papers and books rather than pack them away when it is time to eat or to go out.

Bachelard writes that “in our houses we have nooks and corners in which we like to curl up comfortably. To curl up belongs to the phenomenology of the verb to inhabit, and only those who have learned to do so can inhabit with intensity” (Bachelard 1994, xxxviii). He gives the example of Erasmus, who could not feel at ease in his big house until he had confined himself to a single room: “The dream house must possess every virtue. However spacious, it must also be a cottage, a dove-cote, a nest, a chrysalis. Intimacy needs the heart of a nest” (102).

After we bought new bookcases for the study and shelved books, I did not immediately feel at ease. To begin with, the sight of all the books was overwhelming. I was not used to how the books were now arranged according to related topics of interest. This configuration is different from how I had located the books in the old apartment. Certain books that there were nearby are now downstairs in the living room. Folders of anatomical data from my zoology thesis are now reunited with the final copy, itself placed next to my recent phenomenological studies, themselves next to battered natural history projects written as a schoolboy in Bath.

In addition, I was made uncomfortable by a ceiling that felt too high and the sight of auto traffic through the studio window. Gradually, however, I became used to the books’ arrangement, taking pleasure in seeing my interests laid out visibly and my study materials ready-to-hand. My wife added curtains that created a soft, intimate light and shielded the traffic. I felt hidden from the press of the world outside.

For Heidegger, anxiety is a total disturbance—a total breakdown of our habitual relation to the world (Dreyfus 1991, ch. 10). We catch a glimpse of our true unsettledness. My wife expressed this when she described how, at first, despite all she had invested in our new house, she still just felt being “somewhere” or even “nowhere in

particular.” She would sometimes feel at a loss, with no clear idea of how the furniture should be arranged or how the rooms should work. It is a strange process of “pulling oneself up by one’s own bootstraps” to overcome this anxiety and to create a home to which one can become attached.

At times, I wondered whether, by arranging my books satisfactorily or by adding curtains, we were not *fleeing* our unsettledness and covering up a more fundamental anxiety. This is Heidegger’s indictment of the normal “sleeping” state of human beings: That we flee anxiety by acting as if it were not there. Ultimately, however, one must commit to some arrangement and establish some set of habits and ways of coping, in order to be. We must *genuinely* engage with the world and its conventions if we are to be in the world at all. Refusing the world leads to a state of anxiety none the more authentic for its purity. We must be genuine before we can be authentic.

Sorting out my books and papers each time I move, giving books away, disposing of papers—all these simple acts leave room for growth. By “shedding old skins,” I hope for a dialogue between my history and the possibilities of the moment offered by my new surroundings of house and garden. I am obliged to commit to an organization of the possibilities of this place, which reflects who I am at this moment and my vision for the future. Yet preconceived ideas fall away in the reality of making a home, and that reality is better enjoyed and all the more interesting and challenging for it.

## Walking into Town

How do I get to know the way into town from my new house? Is it a matter of acquiring a “cognitive map”—a representation of the new house in relation to the town? No, not really. Walking is an action, and the memory of the route develops through action. To someone asking, I find myself quite unable to explain directions to a certain place in town, knowing full well I would have no trouble getting there myself.

It is through walking and arriving at a certain location that I feel how that location, with its configuration of buildings and other environmental features, invites me to continue in a particular direction. There is no

need to hold an integrated vision of the whole route in my head. Knowing how to start is the most important step in the process as, afterward, the walk “takes care of itself.” I am reminded of the man who, when asked for directions, replied, “You want to go *there*. Well, I wouldn’t start from *here*!”

## An Open House

The first weekend of January, my sister-in-law, her husband, and their two young daughters visited us. Five and seven, the girls were fascinated with our staircase and going upstairs to explore a place “somewhere else.” Two weeks later, when my father-in-law and his companion visited, I was struck by how my wife introduced them to our home. She emphasized how her study workspace is separate from the rest of the house. Not only is it upstairs but up a few more steps into the older part of the dwelling. Even if she is working at home, she can come downstairs, take a break or make lunch, “leaving her work behind.” Most recently, we held housewarming parties for friends who had helped us in various ways with the new house. All these experiences help one realize how guests contribute to our appreciating new surroundings.

Over these past months, we have established daily routines—rhythms of opening and closing, taking out and bringing in, leaving and returning. We have begun to feel comfortable with our new home. A first phase of home-making is “in place.”

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# Wordless Walkabouts on a Chinese Campus

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Sometimes, one encounters a place for the very first time and that is literally what it feels like—an *encounter*—where “something,” a presence, a *genius loci*, makes itself known. This recognition of “the sentient something” is pre-logical, undocumentable, tacit, personal, even childlike because you are a stranger, and the dull staleness of adult familiarity has given way to naiveté and surprise. Such was my experience when I recently arrived at the Sun Yat Sen University in Guangzhou, China, where I was to devote three weeks to learning Mandarin.

The first words that came to mind about this “something” were “*breathing exuberance*.” Over the next few days, as I kept looking around, my thoughts turned to urban theorist Jane Jacobs’ metaphor of *street ballet*: the “dance” of those relaxed, reliably repetitive, day-to-day interactions that visibly signal healthy human involvement along a city block or within a neighborhood. As I have an abiding interest in the built environment, I was drawn to “staging”—in other words, how construction, gardens, and streets helped or hindered the “ballet.”

To learn more, I conducted systematic morning and evening walkabouts that I describe here. I did not study a large area—nothing more than a 20-minute stroll in one direction or another from my living quarters. My limited language skills allowed me to recognize that the campus—approximately a half mile in extent along a north/south axis—was a Mandarin island in a Cantonese sea.

I construed my being a functionally “deaf and dumb” foreigner as an advantage: it would keep me both open-minded and focused.

The Pearl River delta, with Guangzhou city as its pearl, lays flat and steamy hot with river, river arms, tributaries, islands, canals, greens of every



hue, myriad textures, abundant luxuriant tangles of rice fields, bananas, mangoes, papaya, snails the size of a human fist, and warm, sensuous, quenching rains. The sheer fertility and growth outpaces a Northerner’s ability to take the situation in: Am I inhaling it, or is it inhaling me?

Situated alongside the Pearl River, the Sun Yat Sen University’s urban campus is a handsome oasis of roominess—the ultimate luxury in a dense city of 20 million—yet without an inch of leftover ground. The earliest core of the campus consists of two- and three-story red brick buildings looking faintly like well-to-do English homes, while more modern buildings ripple outward from the center.

Much of the campus land divides into “jigsaw puzzle pieces” of gardens, large,

medium, small, and tiny; some prissy, pruned, geometrical, formal; some wildly profuse, bamboo groves and ponds with and without water lilies. All this tropical vegetation furiously grows by day and furiously sheds by night.

Light’s first blush arrives with audible, soft, drum-brush swooshes. I’m quickly downstairs and out the door. Sweepers collect the night’s rot of profuse campus gardens and swoosh up human detritus. Even the river has early morning sweeper boats manned by crews with long nets collecting floating debris. Any spot on the “stage floor” oscillates back and forth through a pendulum swing of exhales of discard and inhales of tidy making. Whatever else is going on, you can be sure that somebody is there sweeping.

Half a measure behind the brooms comes the soft-padded mallet drumming of tennis shoes, worn by trim, sportily attired campus joggers taking advantage of early-morning 95 degrees rather than midday 105 degrees. I walk through the North Gate, up a few steps, cross a tree-lined plaza, down a few steps, and reach the gracious, generous river walk along the Pearl.

More joggers are here, but they meld into a more general populace. All these millions of people live in small city apartments. The air hangs heavy, sweltering and humid: a spillover to outside public spaces seems sensible enough. Doing their morning stretches, Mom is on the sidewalk in her popsicle-pink seersucker pajamas, Pop in his underwear. The public-toilet attendant walks out from her attached, one-room abode to hang out her wash: blue bra and yellow panties. In another few beats, the “*ta mas*” (gaggles of grannies) gather for group Tai Chi and gossip.

By 7 am the place is soundful. The Chinese speak loudly, yell easily, argue and

fight with grand abandon, play music whether anyone else wants to hear it or not: a demonstrative, “let it all hang out” kind of place. I’m struck by a blurring, a sort of continuum between public and private. With that blurring is an at-home-ness, a physical ease with self, others, and surrounds. People happily plop themselves down anywhere, postures and muscles relaxed.

Circulation-wise, the campus displays a sensitive, sensible fabric of paths that provide an ease of movement from one place to another. These paths range from paved lane to footpath and invariably provide multiple ways to get to any destination.

The campus pathway system is complemented by a plethora of nodes for rest, reflection, and conversation. Some of these nodes are in full view, others discretely set back; some sunny, some shady; some open, some covered; places for big groups, places for pairs, places for just one solitary soul to sit with his thoughts. What I found curious, however, is that walking through these nodes upsets no one, even though these spaces were clearly designed as still sites for repose, reflection, and private conversation.

The central, multi-purpose campus lane that accommodates the occasional cars, carts, motorized wagons, and bikes also provides, on either side, a delightfully wide sidewalk bordered by fragrant eucalyptus trees, though pedestrians walk as often in the lane as on the sidewalks.

On the river walk, families congregate, blocking joggers. There are no patterns of user organization (for example, joggers to the left and families with toddlers to the right; or walking “upstream” on the left and “downstream” on the right). Rather than any spatial order that Westerners take for granted, there seemed to be a sort of “mayhem” with side-stepping at the last second, though this is clearly tempered by a strong awareness of “the other.” For example, a few times when I was walking in the main campus lane, a stranger took my arm and pulled me out of the way of an oncoming bicycle. The cars you can hear, but it is bikes that run you down.

Some mornings I switch to the South Gate where the campus abuts not a river but a wide boulevard. New rules



here: The rights of pathway movement reign supreme. *All very well done, I think to myself. This is a developing country, and they’ve got it down. My own town of 70,000 can’t figure out the complexity of railroad crossings, but here 20 million people can get around just fine.*

There are private cars, but they are not really needed. The web of public transportation provides viable options. Subways, public buses, trams, taxis, rickshaws (motorized or not), and a fleet of (apparently illegal) mopeds with rentable back seats move citizens from destination to destination. Bicycle paths actually go places. Different forms of transportation do not interfere with each other.

The only pedestrian crossing at street level is at the campus gate; to the right and left along the boulevard are pedestrian bridges that do not upset the flow of vehicles. On the campus side is a raised sidewalk seven feet above the street, home to a line of Korean eateries.

A meridian of thick green hedges softens the look and sound of a four-lane road.

Across the boulevard, the sidewalk sports first a railing, next a line of trees, a tall thick hedge, and *only then* a wide walkway with all the amenities associated with “livable cities”: shopping street, storefronts open to the sidewalk, chairs for watching the world, crafts people working on the sidewalk (Guangzhou should be named the city of sidewalks).

There is a mix of buildings, some large (this area is the wholesale textile district) but mostly small operations, butcher, fruit stand, convenience, liquor, grocers, and repair shops. On the parallel street just behind the boulevard are sewing operations in curious breezeway buildings with sides like garage doors that lift up to welcome every bit of cool air.

On the next block is a small pedestrian market. First to show their morning faces are breakfast places and push-cart peddlers with a sort of fry bread. Then small six- and eight-passenger vans arrive and wait, collecting what look like employees living in this neighborhood who work elsewhere. Around 7 am, merchants arrive, opening their shops. Spatial density overlaid with temporal pulsing. It all works. What are the politics and budgeting behind it? Could I get a food cart and peddle morning doughnuts? How do disputes get handled? I don’t know, but it works.

During normal business hours, the campus seems a familiar medium to





me: People do their classroom routines and hang out on front steps, in the faculty lounge, patios, and courtyards. There is a roof terrace, but I never saw anyone on it (maybe it's just too hot in the summer).

I stop to observe the student canteen and the staging of food delivery and clean up. The canteen serves lumberjack portions, much goes uneaten, gets dumped into large trash cans, and the remains are then gone through (for what purpose I don't know—pig farms or compost?). Curiously, The discard activity is more present and “front stage” than the serving.

Another example. I lunched at one of the more posh campus restaurants (table cloths, uniformed waitresses) and found myself next to a table of hearty friends who ordered beer, which is not served in rounds where empty glasses are discretely taken away and replaced by full ones. No, a full crate of beer is carried to the table so that, as the meal proceeds, emptied bottles can be tossed in and new ones pulled out. Other customers, without fussing, walk around the crate that blocks the aisle. I do not know what to do with this observation of so little “backroom” staging—but there it is.

I go on evening strolls. Out the North Gate again. The day-boats transporting people and goods give way to the evening pleasure-cruisers offering cool air, drinks, and a skyline of brightly colored lights decking out all the buildings. Activities on the river walk amplify social life. Couples, families, guys watching girls, girls

knowing it: a scene not unlike Mediterranean promenades.

My favorite evening performer is a Chinese Andrew Goldsworthy who, with a pail of water and huge brush, practices sidewalk-size calligraphy, the characters evaporating as they are drawn. Sidewalk dance classes are offered. Dance contests draw crowds. I can't hold conversations with

these people, but they look happy. Times are good. People are having a good time. The kid in the dance contest is wearing a brand new gold outfit. Modern China slouches forward to be born.

Out the South Gate, down on the boulevard, the morning routine now gets played in reverse. People dawdle with evening street food until midnight, and then the place slows. Other parts of the city never sleep, but the campus and surrounds give way to slumber as the frog population comes into their own. Who knows what starts off a croaking crescendo, but frog song ebbs and flows until dawn.

Of course the simple cycle of day and night is just one temporal oscillation. In Mandarin, Monday is called “one day,” and Tuesday, “two day.” Sunday, however, is “big day.” On weekdays, public spaces run about one-third full. You can always find a place to sit, but there are usually other people within sight.



Sundays ran full “inhale” and activities change. People appeared with musical instruments, and they jammed to their heart's content. Complex chorus arrangements with big flipcharts were set up. The Chinese love to sing, be it old songs, popular songs, or Chairman Mao marching songs.

Improv happened all week, but Sunday was major improv. Eateries provided additional spaces with moveable pots of plants. The number-one piece of street furniture was the lightweight plastic stool (usually of some garish color) for on-the-spot conversation or games of chess. Sunday is bring-your-stool day.

The building patterns that architect Christopher Alexander presented in *A Pattern Language* were selected for being supportive to mental health. In the book's opening pages, Alexander suggests that the ultimate goal in creating built environments should be of moving beyond







*prose*—i.e., thin functional construction—to *poetry*, where multiple meanings and evocative patterns of “space use” densely overlap. The Guangzhou campus manages this in spades. How, exactly, is this working? The patterns I see around me are simple, well-known, and inexpensive—for example, places to sit; places to stroll; places to be near water, be social, be quiet; spaces like verandahs and atria that connect indoors and outdoors. Each pattern seems to have endless renditions, often responding to some minor variation—an outcropping of rock or a tree that is built around rather than bulldozed.

Almost everywhere I look in Guangzhou, the built environment affords, protects, invites human well-being. The campus exploits what might be called a *kaleidoscopic technique*. Inside a kaleidoscope, there are many simple shapes of different colors, which, as the kaleidoscope is turned, become a multitude of changing configurations. On campus, just move your head to glance in a slightly different direction or move a few paces to another spot, and there

they are again, reborn and fresh, the same patterns in a new configuration. I also note a penchant for serial, interlocking edges. Take the boundaries separating campus from river: In order, you have river, railing and boat dock; 20-foot-wide walkway; line of trees interspersed with benches; shallower, eight-foot-wide walkway; impenetrably dense swath of trees and vegetation; ramp road leading into campus; bridge over tunnel for cars going under plaza; second small ramp road into neighborhood; another green strip; lane for both vehicles and pedestrians, leading into wide area of outdoor eateries; and, finally, campus fence and gate.

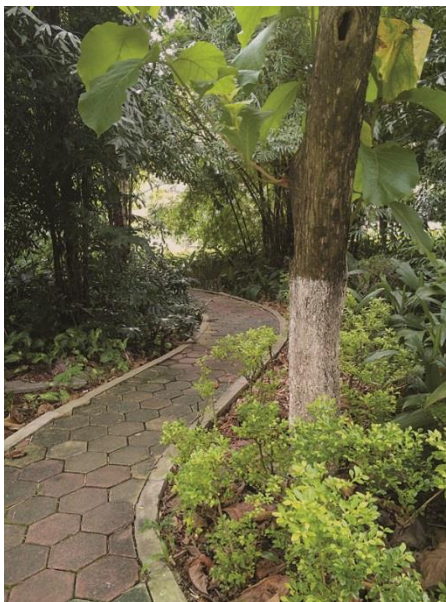
Another important place quality relates to a visibility that is tantalizingly dramatic. There is usually a turn in the path, a bamboo grove screen, something just ahead to be discovered. In addition, there is something fractal in the way paths fit inside other paths and nodes fit inside other nodes, repeating in depth from small to large.

One day I venture farther south of the small pedestrian market just off the boulevard and quickly fall down a rabbit hole into a satanic netherworld. Gotham. Dark, dank, rank, labyrinths of alleys

so narrow sunlight doesn’t get through. Jagged corners, tiny Y splits, I am quickly lost in a maze. I am stared at (which never happens on campus or river walk or boulevard). The men give me a startled “*What the hell?*” look. A couple of women seek eye contact to convey, “*Lady, you’re asking for trouble.*” It seemed wise not to push my luck. The experience, however, was unnerving.

One might say that the campus is an obvious self-contained unit coupled with the ‘bleed’ zone of neighboring services and restaurants clearly part of the campus scene and economy. In venturing south, I went “out of zone,” though this answer does not sit well with me. The campus is guarded, gated, and policed, so guarded from whom, if not Gotham? I think of the campus gardeners who laughed when I photographed them stringing up their hammocks for a mid-day rest. Do they live in Gotham and work on campus?

Do the privileges of campus life not take on meaning because of their contrast to Gotham? Yes, they really do. And should we not consider the distinction that philosopher James Carse makes between *boundary* and *horizon*? The first is a simple line in the sand, mechanical and exclusive; the second, a neighboring and defining potential, permeable and open to redefinition. Did the clerk at my campus hotel scratch and struggle her way out of Gotham into a desk job, using the campus as a horizon rather than a boundary? Do these questions give depth to the “place ballet”? I would think so.







The first two weeks of my walkabouts were mostly exploratory, double checking, trying to capture a sense of daily life with photographs. By the third week, I was noticing internal responses. Comfort mostly. Pleasure at becoming familiar with the kaleidoscope of simple, beautiful patterns in the gardens and buildings. An increasing sense of order and a place for me within it.

The breakfast dim-sum stand on the shopping street knew which ones I liked. The woman (grandmother, I'm guessing) and child who came to the same spot every day at 7 am and 7 pm gave me a sense of solidity; we started waving to each other. The restaurant where I often had dinner thought of me as both a source of amusement and pity (one shouldn't have to dine alone), but we had worked out a routine.

My thoughts returned to that first day's immediate awareness of exuberant breathing. Exuberant I could easily understand: the vegetation, colors, crowds, noise, happy days, and hopeful *horizons*. But the breathing, the alignment and awareness of my own

breath with the rhythms of brooms and rain and frogs, the regularities of the day, the comings and goings of campus life—this shared organic experience, this kind of “thoracic” connexity, was a more subtle but fundamental lesson about life itself.

## References

- Alexander, C. et al., 1977, *A Pattern Language*. Oxford Univ. Press.  
 Carse, J., 1987, *Finite and Infinite Games*. Ballantine Books.  
 Jacobs, J., 1961, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Random House.

## Photographs

- p. 18: University campus. Brooms.  
 p. 19: At home on the street in underwear.  
 p. 19: Shopkeeper at home on the sidewalk.  
 p. 20: River walk. Evening time for social promenade.  
 p. 20: Evening dance contest on the plaza. Good times.  
 p. 20: Sunday. Bring your stool and relax with a game.  
 p. 21, upper left: Variation on river walk pattern. Here a smaller canal.  
 p. 21, lower left: Variation on river walk pattern. Old neighborhood.  
 p. 21, bottom: One of many smaller beckoning and interlocking paths.  
 p. 21, bottom right: One of many smaller ‘fractal’ setback nodal spaces.  
 p. 22: Gotham.  
 p. 22: Gardener resting at noon.  
 p. 22: Boulevard sidewalk. A place grown familiar where I often bought breakfast dim sum.



# The Imprint of Place

Victoria King

*Victoria (Vicki) King's love of the natural world is nourished by the two places in which she and her partner John Cameron reside. Dividing their lives between 55 acres on Tasmania's Bruny Island and the north of England near her son and granddaughter brings richness and complexity to her life that she explores through art and poetry. For more examples of her work, go to: <http://victoria-kingplaceart.blogspot.co.uk/>. [ykblackstone@gmail.com](mailto:ykblackstone@gmail.com). Text and images © 2016 Victoria King. For titles of the artwork shown here, see p. 27.*

Place, space, and a sense of belonging have long occupied my art practice, but it took my migration to Australia from England in 1994 for this understanding to become truly personal. I had left home in 1969, picking up my high school diploma before boarding a Greyhound bus in Kentucky for New York City. I associated 'home' with family dysfunction, and 'homeland' with political dysfunction. It was with a similarly cavalier attitude that I left America for England in 1972 in search of meaning in my life.

I returned to painting in my late 20s after my son was born. In many British art colleges in the 1960s, drawing from "life" was dismissed as belonging to a past world order, and new art disciplines had emerged. It required sheer willpower to discover a "life world" in a life room.

But one day I experienced an epiphany when my vision shifted and I saw the life model in relationship to the room. The entire space came alive. Oil-encrusted easels stratified the room into an abstraction of unnameable shimmering shapes as late afternoon light streamed in from tall windows like light into a cathedral.

*I saw space.* My focus suddenly changed from *looking at* the isolated model to *seeing* the room as a whole. Charcoal marks made only moments before represented a different paradigm. My white paper filled with a different kind of mark-making that integrated my peripheral vision.

This experience confirmed the interconnectedness I had previously acknowledged only intellectually. I began to articulate a holistic way of seeing without naming or judging based in a meditative vision that



brought together what had previously been separate in my life: art, philosophy, and spirituality.

It was only through creating a garden in the north of England that I discovered a personal content for my painting practice, and in the process *a sense of place* and meaning. I planted, gazed at, and recorded ever-changing nature in differing light and seasons. Color became an overwhelming passion. In Cezanne's words, I recognized my goal of attempting to go beyond appearances to convey the experience and essence of seeing:

*Shut your eyes, wait, think of nothing. Now open them... one sees nothing but a great colored undulation. What then? An irradiation and glory of color. That is what a picture should give us, a warm harmony, an abyss in which the eye is lost, in secret germination, a colored state of grace [1].*

Cezanne frequently travelled the short distance from his birthplace of Aix-en-Provence to stand before the majestic Mont St.

Victoire to manipulate ephemeral "*petite sensations*" of color and space [2]. Vision and painting were for him a numinous experience.

In my small English garden, I made color notations. In my attic studio, I painted evocations of being immersed in what felt to be divine beauty. Within the unexpected juxtapositions of flowering color and profuse growth, I was immersed in a multi-sensory experience that was far more than simply visual. I felt fully absorbed in finding equivalents for being surrounded by the atmosphere of subtle, vibrant colors, textures and fragrances, changing light and seasons.

Each day, new possibilities of self-sown harmonies emerged spontaneously. Entering into the garden's sensual intimacy felt like a natural meditation. Losing my "self" in a microcosm of the interior realms of a flower or merging with the unity of the garden required only the breath of intention.

Just as instant blossoms do not arise from a seed packet, paintings have their own processes embedded in time. The nurturing of both requires active contemplation and letting be. At any one time, many paintings are in a dormant stage, some need a gentle nudge and others a severe pruning. Often, paintings with lovely delicate beginnings do not survive.

Gradually, my garden paintings became more abstracted. The dense layers of oil pigments, vivid complementary colors, and intensity of individual brush strokes began to feel claustrophobic and oppressive. I wished for greater depth and more breathing space in the paintings, not realizing this mirrored what I needed in my personal life. My





whose meaning had been hard won. Gardening had once sustained me, so again I sowed the flowers of my previous passion.

Repeatedly, they failed to flourish. There were voracious new predators for each attempt, too little topsoil, even less rainfall, and the sun was far too harsh for tender perennials. I was a gardener in a land where this activity seemed futile and inappropriate. With alarm, I witnessed feral flora and fauna adapting far better than I did.

densely planted suburban, herbaceous garden could not give me a natural long view without disturbing the illusion of my being “somewhere else.”

I began to experiment with water-based acrylic paints and laid canvas on the studio floor, flooding it with thin stains. The transparent fields of colors and accidental incidents echoed nature’s spontaneity and evoked a transcendental place and spaciousness into which both the beholder and I could merge.

In 1994, twenty-one years after I had left America for England, I moved to Australia to be with my new partner, John Cameron, a social ecologist [3]. He had previously lived in the United States and UK and, at that stage in his life, was not prepared to move to England. We bought a modest home with a large mature garden, three acres of dry sclerophyll eucalypt forest, and extensive sandstone outcroppings overlooking the Blue Mountains National Park—land once under Dharug custodianship [4].

I immediately recognized beauty in the exotic and native plants and in the land. Flowers were always in bloom, and mist hung in the valleys like in a Chinese screen. Extraordinary wildlife and birds animated the land with color, song, and movement. I felt surrounded by vast space, intimate diversity, and immense presence.

Yet perhaps it was Australia’s extremes that allowed me no rest. I felt increasingly “homesick.” I missed my son and a place

My art practice, too, suffered in the move to Australia. I painted as I gardened, negotiating new spaces with increasing frustration and waning enthusiasm. The landscape held a sense of particularity and power that was too strong for my artistic attempts to convey. It appeared I was not alone. In galleries, the work of non-indigenous Australian artists mimicked “international” art, or worse, were pastiches of the culturally specific dots and lines of Aboriginal art.

For years, it was only the paintings of Emily Kngwarreye, an elderly Anmatyerre artist from the remote Central Australian outstation of Utopia that inspired me [5]. As I learned more about her culture, I became even more anxious about my studio practice. Art is one of the few meaningful occupations available to Aboriginal peoples severed from their traditional lifeworlds. The shimmer of Aboriginal paintings can mesmerize Western viewers of indigenous art on the white walls of a modern art gallery.

While appropriation of other cultures has long been a tool of Western artists, for them to be influenced by the surface shimmer of dots and lines on indigenous artists’ canvases was, for me, suggestive of a colonial attitude.



At the time, Aboriginal art seemed to disappear into other Australian artists’ blind spots. Cognitive scientists Humberto Maturano and Francisco Varela wrote of this phenomenon:

*By existing, we generate cognitive “blind spots” that can be cleared only through generating new blind spots in another domain. We do not see what we do not see, and what we do not see does not exist. Only when some interaction dislodges us—such as being suddenly relocated to a different cultural environment—and we reflect upon it, do we bring forth new constellations of relation that we explain by saying that we were not aware of them, or that we took them for granted [6].*

In 1998, I met Barbara Weir, an artist from Utopia and niece of Emily Kngwarreye, whose mother was Alyawarre and her father (whom she never met) an Irish worker on a nearby cattle station. She is a member of the “Stolen Generation,” one of many half-caste children separated from their Aboriginal families by cruel government policy that persisted into the 1970s.



When I met Barbara, I recognized trauma in her body language and asked if I could help her or her people in any way. She asked me to write the story of her life and, over the next six years, I sat together with her and Anmatyerre and Alyawarre women friends in the red sand, transcribing their stories as they painted their “Dreamings” and sang ancestral creation songs, often while a kangaroo the men had just killed cooked on an open fire [7].

Theirs is the oldest continuous land-based culture on earth, over 60,000 years old, and kinship connections to the land are profound. I recognized a connection between their embodied engagement with “country” (custodial land) and the culturally specific haptic gestures they made on their canvases. I began to use the term “embodied perception” to describe this *more-than-visual* sense.

Seeing the context in which these artists painted, I came to see how Eurocentric readings of indigenous art and the aesthetic gaze eliminate cultural difference. I discovered what is too often taken for granted: the ground beneath our feet.

Emmanuel Levinas spoke of the nature of the move toward being, toward oneself and others. He contended that this process of relationship occurs “in the risky uncovering of oneself, in sincerity, the breaking up of inwardness and the abandon of all shelter, exposure to traumas, vulnerabilities” [8]. In the center of Australia, in a third-world community peripheral to the lives of most Australians, this process began to unfold for me. As I heard the women’s stories and witnessed their embodied connection to land and kin, and their

trans-generational traumas, I saw the suffering that lay behind the mesmerizing shimmer of their canvases. I began to bear witness to my denial of my own ancestors and displacements and to what my affinity with the sublime in art and nature had repressed.

Each time I returned to my studio in the Blue Mountains from Utopia, I ruthlessly erased and over-painted canvases that did not convey the sense of presence or embodiment I sought. My artwork was based on the land, but no longer did I feel a sense of place or belonging. The color of my skin represented to me the fundamental inequalities and injustices in the world. My gaze—the foundation upon which I had built my English art practice—had become suspect as I discovered the contested ground of place and history. Even my garden had become ecologically suspect and no longer a solace.

A trip to the United States and England at the end of 2002 provided insights contrary to my expectations. On a trip to Taos to interview the Canadian-American artist Agnes Martin, I discovered the remarkable land and indigenous presence of the American Southwest and was humbled by the appropriateness of Martin’s presence there [9]. When visiting my birthplace and family in Kentucky, I felt long repressed emotions that lay to rest some of the issues I had long carried with me. In England, I was delighted to find that my son was involved in a meaningful relationship, and was surprised that I felt claustrophobic in the urban area where I had once lived. The trip affirmed that place making had been discreetly occurring within me in Australia.

Slowly, a new body of work emerged in my studio as I reintroduced “myself” back into my work. Minimal gestures and colors on my canvases became extremely subtle, echoing those of the bush *and* my own skin color—a hybrid middle ground between black and white.

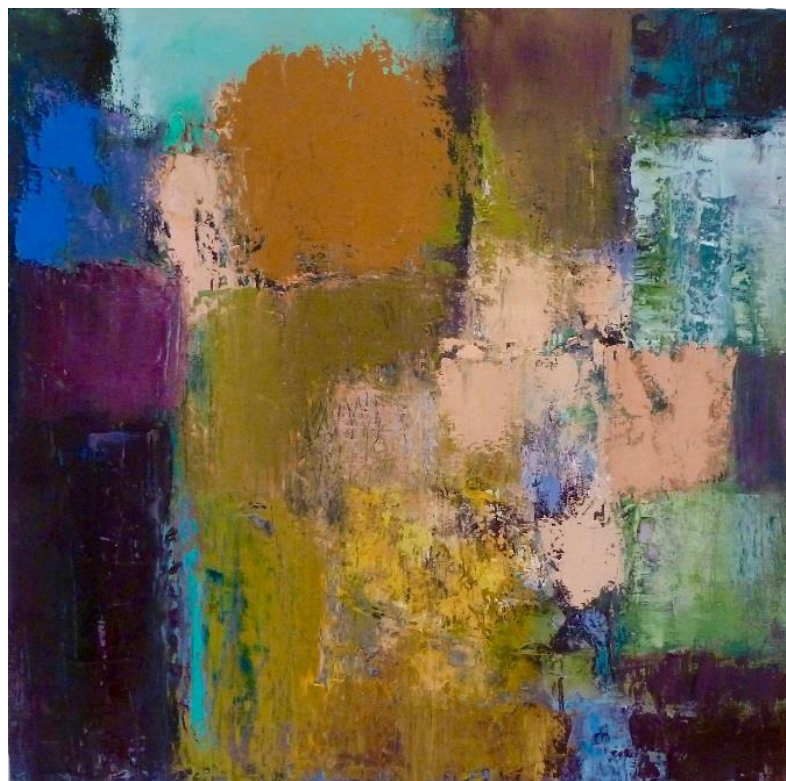
The canvas “ground” created through multiple erasures took on a new dimension as it became more than space or a void, but a subject in itself. Previously, I had explored the haptic as a means *to create art*. Now the canvas took on the significance of *being a place* for my own presence and embodied engagement. I discovered a different “here,” not “there,” vulnerable yet grounded. I realized that *place* must include the present and past—an embodied relationship with time and space.

In April 2004, while in a canoe following an elusive White-faced Heron along the shoreline of Bruny Island, Tasmania, we discovered “Blackstone,” a house discretely nestled into eucalypt trees close to the shore. This property was for sale. Within a year, we moved there to begin a new life together. John has written eloquently about his process of place making at Blackstone and, not surprisingly, mine has been very different [10].

After an initial period of bliss, living on 55 acres with inspiring water and shoreline and among remarkable flora and fauna, we found that the remoteness of this place forced previously undealt-with issues to the fore. It has been a precarious journey, one in which our relationship was tested more than once. I began to write poetry to express not only Blackstone’s beauty but to deal with my anger about injustice and the depression







that lay beneath it. The tragic early intercultural history of Bruny Island's Nuenone people haunted me, and I produced a series of artwork about it.

My *Channel Light* painting series reflects the mesmerizing shimmer of the water of the d'Entrecasteaux Channel. When I walk along the shore, I collect driftwood to make sculptures of birds, and feel a childlike sense of ease for the first time in my life. The bird-life has also inspired a collection of avian

poems and more naturalistic paintings of Bruny Island birds [11].

In 2009, our only grandchild was born in England, and the tyranny of distance once again became unbearable. In 2012, we purchased an English terrace house in an inner city country park nearby, and we now divide our lives between two places that we love.

Deciduous woodland, three lakes with abundant waterfowl, and a river are only a minutes' walk away from our doorstep, and both John and I are active volunteers in the park. I have created a new garden, one already overflowing with colors, textures, and flavors that delight our granddaughter and us.

I have a new studio overlooking the garden, and color has returned to my paintings, both at Kingfisher Cottage and Blackstone. I now feel a sense of place in both, a sense of grace.

Making art for me is a sacred process—an act of creation, “self-less” and healing. My art can also be seen as radical action: Every gesture, if consciously made, is an act of *taking up space*, a defiant outward gesture that is an affirmation of oneself as an irritant within a materialistic society.

Poet Paul Celan recognized that “Art, with all its attributes and future additions, is also a *problem* and, as we can see, one that is variable, tough, long lived, let us say eternal” [12]. Because of my experience of the complexities surrounding place affiliation and my art practice, it became a matter of urgency for me to investigate the *problems* of art in order to keep creating it.

*Come, see real  
flowers  
of this painful world.*

—Bashō (1644–1694) [13]

## Notes

1. Paul Cezanne in M. Milner, *On Not Being Able to Paint*, Routledge, 1989 [1950], pp. 24–25.

2. For early Christians, Mont St. Victoire was a pilgrimage site and still holds a powerful presence in the countryside surrounding Aix-en-Provence.

3. While on a three-month Tibetan Buddhist retreat in France at Lerab Ling, I inconveniently fell in love. I rationalized the difficult decision to leave my 17-year old son with his father by reasoning that we would spend time together in England and Australia each year.



4. A Polish couple came to Australia after WWII and built the house, and when the husband died the wife sold it to us. Their love of the place was evident in the garden.

On our first meeting, she greeted me with words that at the time I misconstrued: “You could be my daughter.” I learned after she died that this elderly couple had kept two secrets. When they left Poland they also left behind their only daughter. I can imagine too well the pain it caused both mother and daughter, who had epilepsy and was not allowed entry into Australia due to harsh immigration requirements.

I only discovered their other secret, one far more unnerving, ten years later. Her husband had been and remained until his death a Nazi sympathizer. Knowing that the person who had created the elaborate and beautiful garden terraces once worked in a concentration camp complicated my feelings for the place.

5. An early settler established a cattle station there in an unusually good springtime of rain, not knowing the extremely arid nature of the land. He chose to call it “Utopia” rather than its Anmatyerre name *Uturupa*, meaning “big sand hill.”

Utopia was the first Aboriginal outstation to be granted Land Rights in 1978, and Barbara Weir was instrumental in the process as

she was one of the few Anmatyerre and Al-yawarre people who could speak English, a language she had been forced to learn when she was taken from her family to a Christian mission over a 1,000 kilometres away. It took her 12 years to find her family again.

6. H. Maturana and F. Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge*, Shambhala, 1992, p. 242.

7. The women’s stories were published with my essays about Utopia in *Emily Kngwarreye: The Person and Her Paintings*, DACOU, 2010. The women included the seven Petyarre sisters: Gloria, Kathleen, Myrtle, Ada Bird, Nancy, Violet, and Jeanne; Anna Petyarre Price; Glory Ngala; Weida Kngwarreye; and Emily Kngwarreye.

8. Emmanuel Levinas in N. Princenthal, ed., *Doris Salcedo*, Phaidon Press, 2000, p. 122.

9. I researched the lives and artwork of Agnes Martin and Emily Kngwarreye for my PhD, *Art of Place and Displacement: Embodied Perception and the Haptic Ground*, University of New South Wales, 2005; available at:

<http://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/unsworks:778>.

10. John’s “Letters from Far South” are published in *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, 2008–2014 volumes.

Links to his essays and photographs of Blackstone can be seen at: <http://johncameronwritingplace.blogspot.co.uk/>.

11. *Black Stone Birds*, Black Stones Press, 2012.

12. Paul Celan in N. Princenthal, ed., *Doris Salcedo*, Phaidon Press, 2000, p. 114, italics in original.

13. Matsuo Bashō, *On Love and Barley: Haiku of Bashō*, Penguin, 1985.

## Artworks by Victoria King

p. 1: *Channel Light* series, oil on canvas.

p. 23: *Flowering Light*, oil on canvas.

p. 24, upper left: *Eucalypts*, watercolor on Fabriano paper.

p. 24, upper right: *Dusk*, watercolor on Fabriano paper.

p. 24: *Desert Light*, watercolor on Fabriano paper.

p. 25: *Channel Light* series, watercolor on Fabriano paper (left); oil on canvas (middle and right).

p. 26, upper left: *Shorebirds*, driftwood and found fencing wire.

p. 26, upper right: *Vale, Autumn*, oil on canvas.

p. 26, below: *Forty-spotted Pardalotes*, oil on wood panel.

# Reinventing the Screened Porch

## Bioclimatic Design in the American Midwest

Gary J. Coates

*Coates is Professor of Architecture at Kansas State University. His books include: The Architecture of Carl Nyrén (2007); Erik Asmussen, Architect (1997); and Resettling America (1981). [gcoates@ksu.edu](mailto:gcoates@ksu.edu). Text and photographs © 2016 Gary J. Coates.*

When I was growing up in the Mid-Atlantic state of Maryland in the 1950s and 1960s, no houses had air conditioning. My family survived the hot, humid summers because we had a small (10' x 14') screened back porch.

Like many such porches in the Mid-Atlantic region, it was a simple lean-to structure with a poured concrete floor attached to the main body of the house. It was furnished with several comfortable sitting chairs and a four-place dining table. Compared to interior rooms, the porch was well shaded, naturally ventilated, and relatively cool. In the summer heat, we would bring out a large fan. The only activity for which we did not use the porch was nighttime sleeping.

When my wife and colleague, Susanne Siepl-Coates, asked me to design a screened porch for our house in Manhattan, Kansas, I had mixed feelings. On one hand, I remembered fondly my experiences with our screened porch as I was growing up. On the other hand, I had a number of objections to the notion of a screened porch in Kansas. I

questioned the usefulness of such a structure in this continental temperate climate characterized by seasonal extremes: summer temperatures often soaring to over 100 degrees Fahrenheit and winter temperatures sometimes dropping below zero.

Nevertheless, I began designing. My initial sketches mirrored the form of my childhood porch—a simple lean-structure attached to the main body of the house. My design seemed satisfactory but evoked no enthusiasm from me or from Susanne. We put the project “on hold.” When she raised the issue again some years later, I began to explore alternatives without regard to cost considerations or presumptions about what a porch should be. I applied my knowledge of bioclimatic design to the task of making a porch usable much of the Kansas year.

As images very close to what we eventually built emerged in my drawings, Susanne and I both became excited. Here, we thought, was a porch that would be a joy to use during much of the year. Susanne developed a plan for a surrounding garden with a variety of outdoor spaces suitable for use at

various times of the day and year. Working together, with the help of a local nursery, we completed a final design.

It was only after this final design emerged that I sought to understand why this proposal turned out to be so successful, when several other alternatives had failed. I compared the porch design with my childhood porch in Maryland. I realized that, unknowingly, I had re-invented the screened back porch, remedying typical porch problems and discovering new architectural potentials. Here, I describe five significant differences between the typical screened porch and my Kansas porch design.

### 1. Size matters

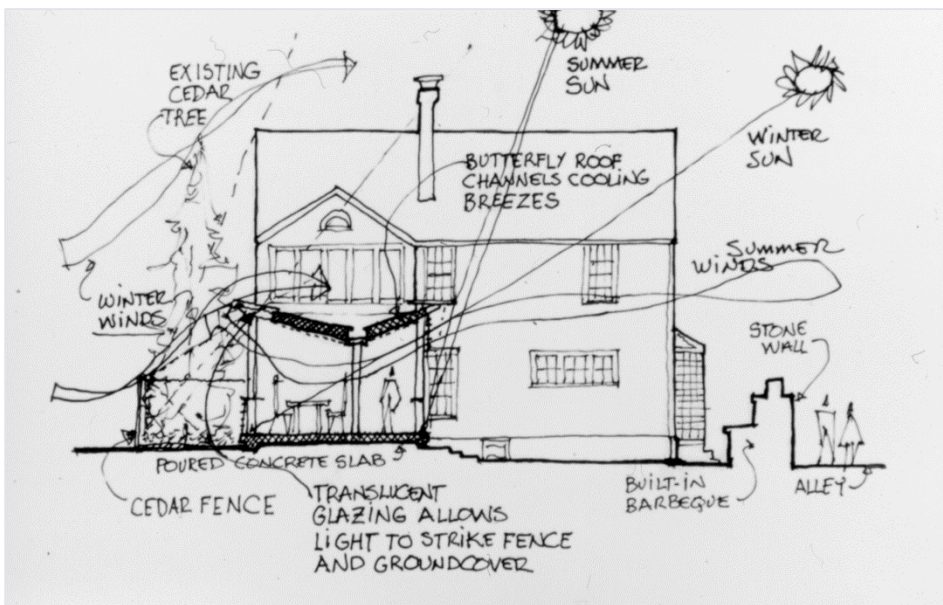
Most screened porches are relatively small. I remembered the sense of “cabin fever” I often had as a child, living with the rest of my family cramped in a tiny space all summer. There was no way to escape each other, either physically or psychologically. When togetherness is forced, it becomes a burden rather than a blessing.

Because our Kansas porch is so generously sized (approximately 280 square feet), we never feel confined, whether we are using it alone or sharing it with friends.

### 2. Shape matters

In a large, simple room, it may be possible for several people to be present together without physically getting in each other's way, yet they still might somehow feel they are intruding upon each other. In a more complex space, with alcoves and a variety of overlapping spaces, it is possible for individuals and groups to have their own clearly marked realms while still sharing the larger space.

Our Kansas porch incorporates a range of layered, yet clearly recognizable, spatial realms defined by changes in both plan and







section. We are able to shift from one sub-space to another to avoid the sun and wind or to find a place more appropriate for a new activity. In addition, we can move furniture to support different uses in different places in different porch locations. In early spring, for example, we move the lightweight café table and chairs, then located in the alcove

adjacent to the rainwater cistern/fish pond, to the alcove at the southern edge of the porch. Here, we sit to catch the low warming rays of the sun. For larger dinner parties, we set up, in the middle of the porch, a larger table made with a door on top of two sawhorses. We are regularly intrigued by the

many ways that guests rearrange porch furnishings to make their own preferred groupings. Both the size and the spatial richness of our porch make this flexibility and adaptability possible.

Because the plan incorporates a central space with a variety of adjoining sub-areas, the porch does not feel too big when occupied by only one person, nor does it feel too small when occupied by many people. While we might well have anticipated this as professors of architecture, Susanne and I have been regularly struck by this porch quality.

### 3. Light matters

In the typical lean-to porch, the ceiling space is dark and, in summer, filled with trapped hot air. While a ceiling fan can push the hot air down and out, thereby relieving thermal discomfort, there is a sense of darkness overhead and a space lit only from the sides.

The butterfly roof of our Kansas porch opens the entire space to the sky, and the carefully designed overhangs shield the sun when it becomes too hot. In addition, warm air cannot collect under the ceiling because of the roof's inverted "V" shape, which generates a Venturi effect channeling breezes and quickening the south winds that prevail during our hot Kansas summers.

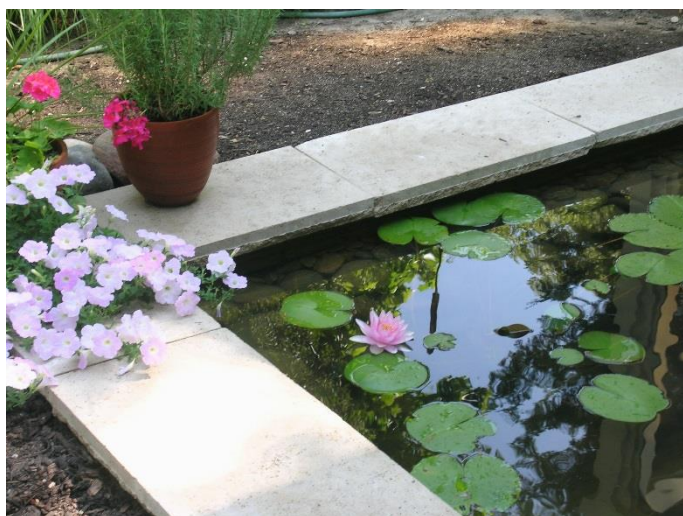
One of the least desirable characteristics of the typical porch is its darkening adjoining rooms. To avoid this situation, I placed skylights in the flat roofed portion of the porch next to the windows and glazed door of the existing sunroom.

A skylight along the entire north edge of the butterfly roof not only brings daylight into parts of the porch where one might least expect it but also provides light to the trellised fence and garden along the porch's north side. Rather than darkening the house and garden, the porch and attached sunroom is suffused with a gentle light.

### 4. View matters

The typical porch is placed at the side of the house with a view looking out into a garden. Remembering my childhood porch, I realized that I often felt I was wearing a broad brimmed hat; my view was limited to horizontal vistas offering no visual access to sky or birds in trees.





Because it extends some 24 feet into the garden, our porch is immersed in that landscape rather than being at the edge. With our butterfly roof, not only is the space filled with carefully controlled daylight, but one can watch birds as they fly from limb to limb, visiting our several bird feeders as well as the carved limestone fountain that

reading, or doing nothing but rocking back and forth on the porch swing.

## 5. Micro-climate matters

As was the case with my childhood home, it is not possible to use most porches in the early spring or late fall because the concrete

keeps our cistern/fish pond aerated and alive.

Rather than sitting next to a house in a small, dark space, we find that using our Kansas porch is much closer to the experience of sitting under a high canopy shade tree next to a running stream. Because we are surrounded by and immersed in our garden, we can enjoy its fragrances and beauty while having a meal,

floor slab is cold, and the sun does not penetrate the porch space deeply enough to warm either the floor or the porch users.

I designed the angles and shading overhangs of the porch's butterfly roof so that the sun would penetrate the entire space even on the shortest day of the year, December 21. Protected from north winter winds and warmed by a southern sun, we have been pleased by how comfortable the porch can be, even in winter. When sitting in a wind-protected portion receiving full sun, we can use the porch, even when the ambient air temperature is as low as 35 degrees.

In summer, the horizontal shading device on the porch's south side, along with two maple trees at the south edge of the garden, provide solar protection as do several deciduous and evergreen trees to the west of the porch.

When summer weather becomes extremely hot, we augment the architecturally enhanced breezes from the south with a floor fan. Because the concrete floor is always shaded in the summer and because,





even in the hottest months, there is a reasonable drop in nighttime temperatures, the porch's natural ventilation is supplemented by radiant cooling.

Eventually, we intend to enhance this radiant cooling by circulating cool water through polyethylene coils already installed in the concrete floor. These coils will be connected to an on-demand water heater that, in the colder winter months, will provide radiant heating. This radiant cooling/heating system will significantly extend the porch's comfort zone.

### **Spending time outside**

Since completing the porch, we have been pleasantly surprised by how often it is comfortable even in the summer heat and winter cold. In the Kansas climate, there are only two or three months when it is too cold to use the porch. Even in the hottest Kansas





weather, there are at least some portions of the day when we can be outside.

Because of the porch, our home life has changed considerably. During a typical day before we built the porch, we were outside only infrequently. Now we spend significant time outdoors during all seasons.







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# Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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# Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

Published two times a year, **EAP** is a forum and clearing house for research and design that incorporate a qualitative approach to environmental and architectural experience and meaning.

One key concern of **EAP** is design, education, and policy supporting and enhancing natural and built environments that are beautiful, alive, and humane. Realizing that a clear conceptual stance is integral to informed research and design, the editor is most interested in phenomenological approaches but also gives attention to related styles of qualitative research. **EAP** welcomes essays, letters, reviews, conference information, and so forth.

## Exemplary Themes

- The nature of environmental and architectural experience;
- Sense of place, including place identity and place attachment;
- Architectural and landscape meaning;
- The environmental, architectural, spatial, and material dimensions of lifeworlds;
- Changing conceptions of space, place, and nature;
- Home, dwelling, journey, and mobility;
- Environmental encounter and its relation to environmental responsibility and action;
- Environmental design as place making;
- Environmental and architectural atmospheres and ambiances;
- The role of everyday things—furnishings, tools, clothing, interior design, landscape features, and so forth—in supporting people's sense of environmental wellbeing;
- Sacred space, landscape, and architecture;
- The practice of a *lived* environmental ethic.

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