



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

Vol. 14 ■ No. 3

ISBN 1083-9194

www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/EAP.html

Fall ■ 2003

This issue of *EAP* completes our 14th year. We enclose a renewal form and would appreciate responses as soon as possible so there will be fewer reminders to send in the first 2004 issue.

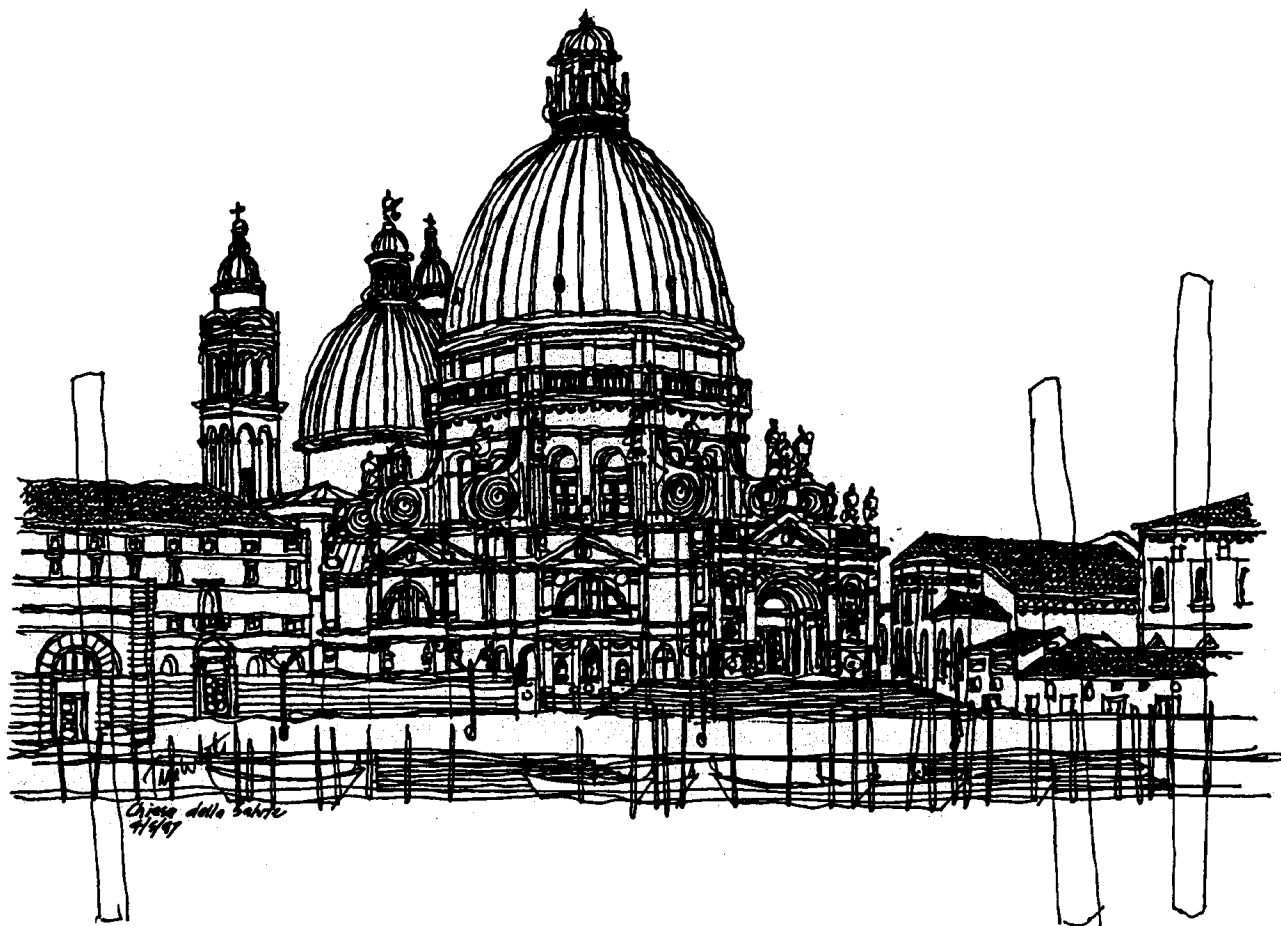
This issue includes a review of architectural theorist Bill Hillier's *Space Is the Machine*, which develops the important ideas of space syntax in new conceptual and applied directions. Next, geographer J. Douglas Porteous provides one practical example of what was called in an earlier *EAP* issue, "the practice of a lived environmental ethic."

Finally, architect Tim White examines travel drawing as it offers a way to empathize with place and landscape and to know them in a deeper, more

comprehensive way. In this issue, all illustrations, including the one below, are by White.

Phenomenology Conferences

The annual conferences of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP) and the Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences (SPHS) will be held, in Boston, 6-8 November. In turn, the annual meeting of the International Association for Environmental Philosophy (IAEP) will be held 8-10 November. All sessions are at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel, 64 Arlington Street. For details and programs, go to: www.spep.org.



Alexander's *Nature of Order*

We have recently been informed of a change of publishing plans for Christopher Alexander's four-volume *The Nature of Order*, the first volume of which—*The Phenomenon of Life*—we reviewed in the winter 2002 *EAP*. The four volumes, which were to be published by Oxford University Press, will instead be published by the Center for Environmental Structure, the non-profit organization that has been the working base for Alexander's architectural and theoretical work for the last 35 years. For ordering information, go to www.natureoforder.com or call 510-841-6166.

Items of Interest

Qualitative Research in Psychology is a new journal that will begin publication in 2004. One aim is “to establish firmly qualitative inquiry as an integral part of the discipline of psychology,” though the journal will also accept articles from researchers in other disciplines. To order the journal, go to: www.qualresearchpsych.com. For submission information, contact American editor Martin Packer at the Psychology Department at Duquesne University: packer@duq.edu.

The **Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center** offers long-distance master's and doctoral study programs “in the study of humanistic thought that puts the creative human spirit at its center.” The curriculum has recently incorporated a program in “ecological sustainability.” 450 Pacific Ave., 3rd fl., San Francisco, CA 94133; 415-394-5220.

The *Permaculture Activist* is a quarterly newsletter that works to “develop an ecologically sustainable land use and culture.” A recent issue focuses on “permaculture design,” which is said to “take advantage of natural forces by concentrating their beneficial effects and deflecting or scattering negative energies.” PO Box 1209, Black Mountain, NC 28711; www.permacultureactivist.net.

The **Leopold Education Project** is an interdisciplinary educational program based on the classic writings of conservationist Aldo Leopold. The aim is to “instill a love, respect, and admiration for the land,

leading to an ecologically literate citizenry with an intense consciousness of the earth.” Curriculum materials are distributed and workshops are organized in partnership with individuals, businesses, non-profit groups, and governmental agencies. 1783 Buerkle Circle, St. Paul, MN 55110; www.lep.org.

Phenomenology Online is a web site established by University of Alberta professor of education Max Van Manen, author of *Researching Lived Experience*, one of the most useful introductions to doing phenomenological research. The site includes “sources,” “scholars,” and other related “web sites.” Particularly useful is a “forum,” which allows readers to post research questions and answers. www.phenomenologyonline.com

Membership News

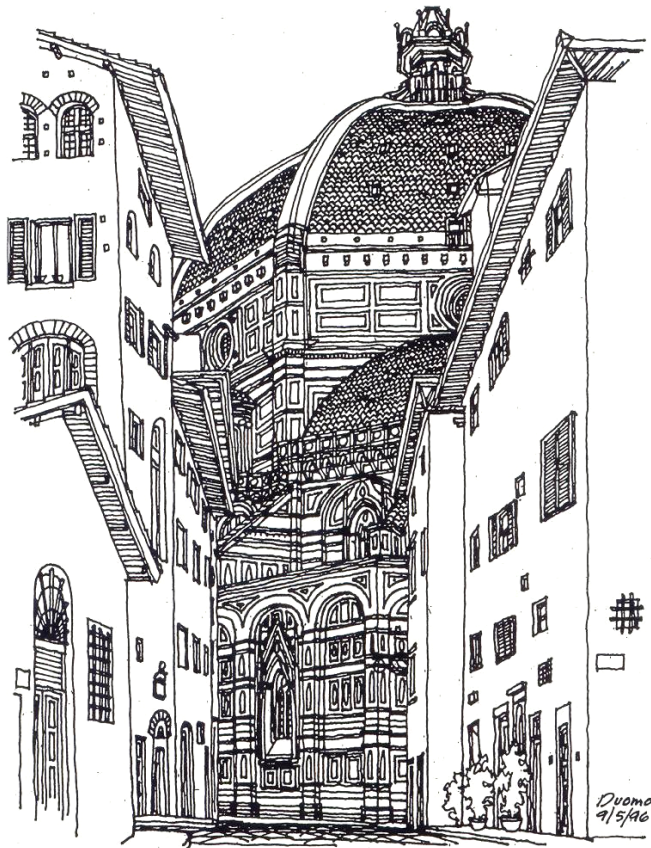
Information architect **Andrew Cohill** writes: “Thanks as always for the great work with *EAP*. It's a small publication, but it's also the only periodical that I read carefully from cover to cover.

“I left the university last year to go into professional practice as a technology advisor to communities, nonprofits, and businesses. It may seem odd for someone like me to read *EAP*, but the information-technology industry has failed utterly and completely to consider the environment in which we use the now-pervasive devices—computers, PDAs, cell phones, beepers, voice recorders, and the like.

“*EAP* reminds me, issue by issue, that we must always consider context as we choose our tools. I attribute most of the dot-com bubble collapse to an arrogant disregard of context by the IT industry. Tools and “solutions” that are designed and marketed without understanding the context and environment in which they will be used will usually fail. The dot-coms were too busy to have a conversation with the users expected to buy their products.” Design Nine, 2306 Plymouth St., Ste 100, Blacksburg, VA 24060; 540-951-4400; www.designnine.org.

New subscribers **Richard Easterly** and **Debra Salstrom** are plant ecologists and botanists who work to understand the interface between animal habitat choices and plant communities in the shrub steppe habitat of central Washington. Richard writes that

the ideas in *EAP* are “a good match to our approach to ecological processes.” He looks forward to “a phenomenal newsletter”! SEE Botanical Consulting, PO Box 4027, Tenino, WA 98589.



Citations Received

Todd W. Bressi, ed., 2002. *The Seaside Debates: A Critique of the New Urbanism*. NY: Rizzoli.

A helpful effort to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the New Urbanist movement; includes contributions from Andres Duany, Peter Katz, Jaquelin Robertson, Colin Rowe, Witold Rybczynski, and others. Projects in eight cities are discussed—San Francisco; Pittsburgh; Seattle, Pasadena; Tucson; Alexandria, Virginia; Markham, Ontario; & Kendall, Florida.

Brent C. Brolin, 2002. *The Designer's Eye: Problem-Solving in Architectural Design*. NY: Norton.

This architectural critic uses black-and-white photographs of actual buildings, paired with digitally manipulated images in ‘before and after’ comparisons, to illustrate how “designers can manipulate form and material to achieve desired effects,

such as emphasizing or diminishing building elements, imposing visual order on a façade, or adding ‘grace’ notes.”

Gary J. Coates, 2003. All Tradition is Change, *Arkitektur*, 4 (June): 46-57.

An interpretive study of Swedish architect Carl Nyrén’s Vitlycke Museum in northern Bohuslan on Sweden’s west coast. Coates argues that this building “not only changes our understanding of the architecture of the present and past but also opens up unimagined possibilities for the future.”

Samuel Colman, 1912. *Harmonic Proportion and Form in Nature, Art and Architecture*. Mineola, NY: Dover Reprint, 2003.

This edition is Dover’s recent republication of Colman’s original 1912 volume that attempts to identify geometric laws governing proportional form in the natural and humanmade worlds, including architecture. Reprints the original 302 drawings by the author, who was also artist and designer.

Gretchen C. Daily & Katherine Ellison, 2002. *The New Economy of Nature: The Quest to Make Conservation Profitable*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

These writers ask whether “the drive for profits, which has done so much harm to the planet, can possibly be harnessed to save it”? Examples discussed include New York City’s effort to repair its largely natural upstate filtration system that had been purifying the city’s water supply; Costa Rica’s use of ecotourism as a means to pay private landowners to maintain functioning rainforests and other ecosystems; and John Hancock Financial Services’ creation of a fund that would invest in newly planted forests.

Christopher Day, 2003. *Consensus Design: Socially Inclusive Process*. Oxford: Architectural Press.

This architect develops a method to “involve people in shaping the places where they live and work.” Includes several case studies in the UK, US, and Sweden.

Michael E. DeSanctis, 2002. *Building from Belief: Advance, Retreat, and Compromise in the Remaking of Catholic Church Architecture*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

This professor of fine arts examines the “theoretical foundations of recent Catholic church design in light of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council” and assesses “the state of sacred architecture as one finds it operating today in average, American parish communities.”

Lawrence D. Frank, Peter O. Englelke, & Thomas L. Schmid, 2003. *Health and Community Design: The Impact of the Built Environment on Physical Activity*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

This book is “a comprehensive examination of how the built environment encourages or discourages physical activity, drawing together insights from a range of research on the relationships between urban form and public health.” Useful chapters considering why urban and suburban development should be designed to promote physical activity such as walking and cycling, and helpful discussion illustrating the linkages among physical fabric, proximity, and connectivity as expressed through pathways and land use patterns.

Mindy Thompson Fullilove, 1996. Psychiatric Implications of Displacement: Contributions from the Psychology of Place, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 153, 12 (Dec.): 1516-1523.

Drawing on literature from geography, psychology, anthropology, and psychiatry, this article “describes the psychological processes that are affected by geographic displacement.”

Mindy Thompson Fullilove, 2001. Root Shock: The Consequences of African American Dispossession, *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 78, 1 (March):72-80.

This article explores the short- and long-term impacts of American urban renewal for African American communities. These impacts include financial loss, psychological trauma, loss of social organization, social paralysis of dispossession, and a collapse of political action

Timothy J. Gorringer, 2002. *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This Christian theologian “stresses the significance of the built environment to the fabric of life by illustrating that it *is* the fabric of life.” Key themes Gorringer uses to organize his argument include *just building* (adequate shelter for all), *empowerment* (all parties of place becoming involved in the making and remaking of that place), *situatedness* (making a home and becoming rooted), *diversity* (affirming built vernaculars), and *enchantment* (providing motivating visions and values).

David Hancocks, 2001. *A Different Nature: The Paradoxical World of Zoos and Their Uncertain Future*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

This zoo director and architect presents a history of zoos and a plea for their more enlightened design. One example: In critiquing a 1930s modernist zoo design, Hancocks laments: “No one asked the penguins how they enjoyed having to simplify their needs to live each day in a minimalist pit.” He argues that zoos must be reinvented; the need is “a new type of institution, one that praises wild things, that engenders respect for all animals, and that interprets a holistic view of nature.”

Ken Hillis, 1999. *As-If Gods: Technology, Fantasy, and the Resistance to Abstraction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

An examination of the institutional and scientific history of virtual-reality environments as well as the philosophical ideas that form the assumptions of the new digital technologies: “I am interested in the ethics of virtuality. VEs do not only substitute, represent, or simulate the concrete and fantasy places within which the embodied subject participates in the lived world. VEs also represent an alienation of political and ethical values and meaningful practices to the degree that these values and practices are reformulated as technology’s ends... For example, freedom is highly valued, but rather than creatively engaging with the contingent limits to freedom, VEs propose we surround ourselves with freedom as a commodity we produce *as if* gods” (p. xxxiii).

Molly Lee & Gregory A. Reinhardt, 2003. *Eskimo Architecture: Dwelling and Structure in the Early Historic Period*. Fairbanks: Univ. of Alaska Press.

This study “describes the variety of houses and other buildings that constitute indigenous Eskimo architecture of the early historic period, when, we assume, it was closest to traditional, that is, the precontact built form.” The argument is made that “the seasonal alternation of winter and summer dwelling more accurately characterizes Eskimo housing patterns than does the widely held stereotype of the snowblock igloo...”

Morna Livingston, 2003. *Steps to Water: The Ancient Stepwells of India*. NY: Princeton Arch. Press.

A study of western India’s stone cisterns—or stepwells—built from the 5th to the 19th centuries to collect the water of the monsoon rains and keep it accessible for the remaining dry months of the year.

Preisner, Wolfgang F. & Ostroff, Elaine, Eds., 2001. *Universal Design Handbook*. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Universal design calls for environments and products that respect the diversity of human beings, particularly those individuals who are less able because of physical or psychological differences. The many chapters in this book (which is over

2,000 pages long) “cover the full scope of accommodation issues from universally-designed buildings to internet access.” Provides examples of standards and design solutions from around the world, including information on the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines.

Jonathan E. Schroeder, 2002. *Visual Consumption*. NY: Routledge.

This book examines how images communicate and what the production and consumption of images mean for marketing and society. Includes a chapter on the role that architecture

plays in visual consumption, focusing on the banking industry’s use of classical architectural imagery as a way to express stability, strength, security and timeless values. Schroeder concludes that “the classical form is too culturally embedded and visually powerful as a communicative mechanism for financial institutions to jettison.” Far from dead, “the language of classicism lives on in marketing campaigns, bank Websites, and corporate reports, lending rhetorical authority and visual presence to the business of image management.”

Gordon Strachan, 2003. *Chartres: Sacred Geometry, Sacred Space*. London: Floris Books.

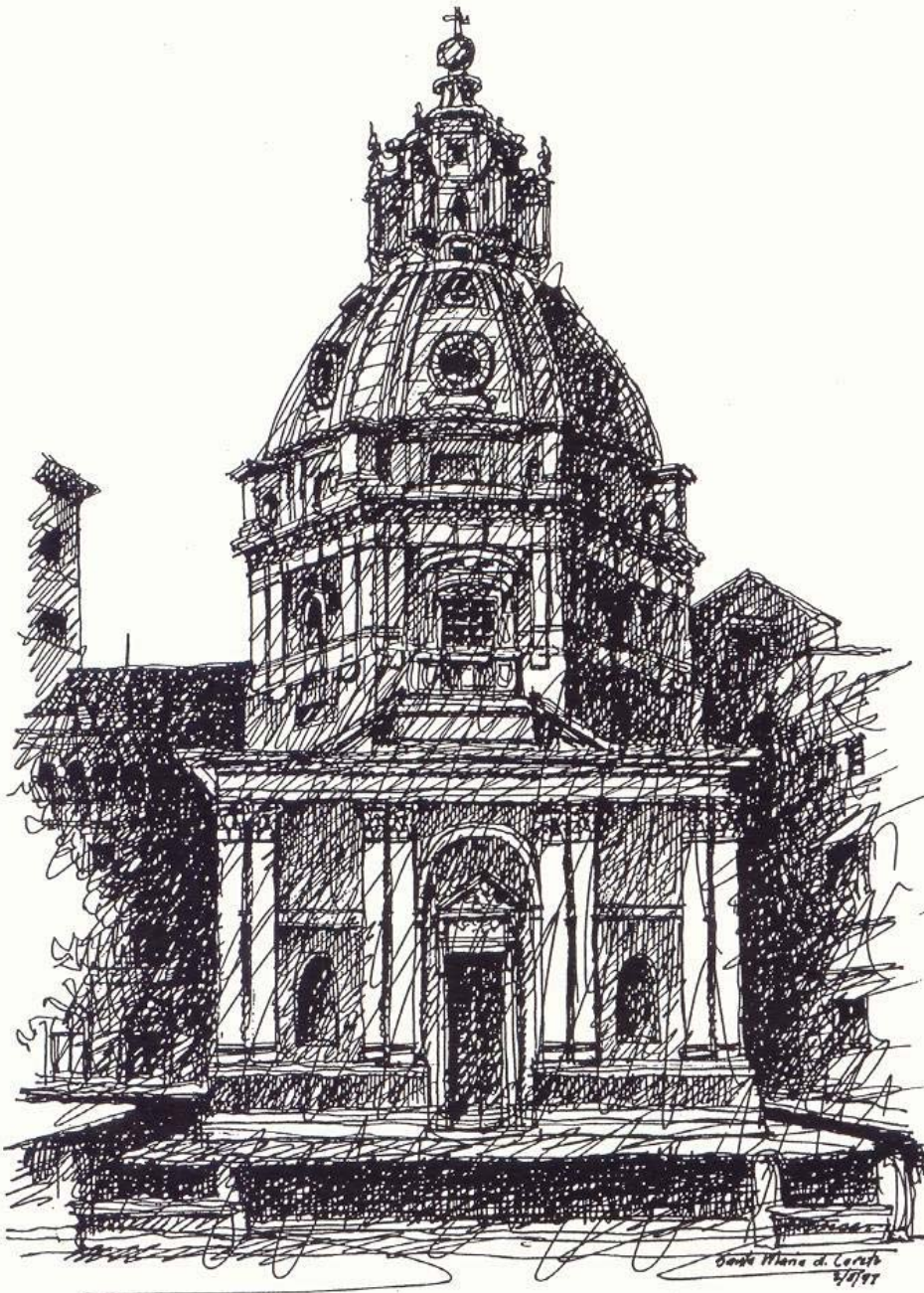
This writer argues that Chartres Cathedral can be understood in terms of “a unique combination of earth energies of the ancient site, the marriage of Christian and Islamic architecture, and the mysticism and skills of medieval geometers and craftsmen.”

Chip Sullivan, 2002. *Garden and Climate*. NY: McGraw Hill.

This landscape architect uses the four traditional elements of earth, fire, air, and water to examine how environmental designers of the past created successful garden microclimates. Topics explored include fountains, allées, orientation to sun, earthen seats, grottos, sunken gardens, subterranean rooms, and boscoes. “The great environments of the past were a subtle, but thorough blend of metaphysics, passive design, and art. The great microclimates of the past were created through intuition, common sense, and an intimate connection to the seasons.”

John Wilkes, 2003. *Flowforms: The Rhythmic Power of Water*. London: Floris.

This sculptor and designer discusses his life-long study of applied research into the rhythms of water. He also presents the development of “flowforms”—fountainlike vessels that work with and enhance the natural rhythms of water and other fluids. An important contribution to Goethean science and environmental phenomenology.



Book Review

Bill Hillier, 1996. *Space Is the Machine*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.

...architecture, through the design of space, creates a virtual community with a certain structure and a certain density. This is what architecture does and can be seen to do, and it may be all that architecture does. If space is designed wrongly, then natural patterns of social co-presence in space are not achieved. In such circumstances, space is at best empty, at worst abused and a source of fear (p. 188).

In the fields of architectural and environment-behavior research, architectural theorist Bill Hillier's theory of space syntax continues to be one of the most rewarding efforts to understand the ways in which people and the physical environment are inescapably related (for an earlier report on Hillier's work, see *EAP*, spring 1993).

The reasons for the growing importance of space syntax relate to a number of interrelated strengths of the approach:

- A conclusively established connection between conceptual argument and real-world confirmation;
- A highly effective connection between theory and practice whereby the ideas can readily be translated into practical application, including the effective evaluation of specific building and urban designs in terms of pathway movements and potential interpersonal encounters;
- Quantitative procedures that almost certainly arise out of the world of environmental and architectural experience and, unlike so many other quantitative methods and portraits, actually depict *real* lifeworld structure;
- A creative translation of these quantitative measures into vivid graphic and cartographic presentations that allow non-specialists to easily and quickly see spatial and environmental patterns and linkages;
- Perhaps most important, a powerful demonstration that the central way in which the physical environment contributes to human life is through *spatial pattern*—more specifically, through what Hillier now calls *configuration*—the way that the parts of a whole relate spatially and help engender one potential field of spatial

and environmental behavior and actions rather than some other:

If we wish to consider built environments as organized systems, then their primary nature is configurational, principally because it is through spatial configurations that the social purposes for which the built environment is created are expressed (p. 92).

In *Space Is the Machine*, Hillier uses spatial configuration as a hallmark principle to provide a comprehensive theory of architecture and urban design. In part I, he examines the crux of architecture, which he argues is the use of informed understanding to provide a suitable fit between human needs and the non-discursive aspects of the environment—most centrally, its spatial configuration.

Hillier then devotes part II to a consideration of non-discursive regularities between spatial configuration and human life, by examining, first, the “deformed grid” of traditional cities; next, post-war housing estates; and, finally, building interiors.

In discussing in part II the way that spatial configuration of traditional urban neighborhoods vs. 20th-century public housing leads to different ways of moving through, encountering, and feeling safe in these places, Hillier provides a major contribution to understanding how physical and human worlds are mutually sustaining.

In part III, Hillier draws on the regularities discussed in part II to identify broader “local-to-global spatial laws” that describe the relationship between human life and architectural and urban configurations. Finally, in part IV, Hillier attempts a “theoretical synthesis.” He concludes that “the architect as scientist and as theorist seeks to establish the

laws of the spatial formal materials with which the architect as artist then composes” (p. 10).

As a phenomenologist, let me emphasize that Hillier is a structuralist using largely positivist methods to demonstrate the ways in which spatial configuration both generates and arises out of social pattern and organization. He explains that the “built environment is not so much a thing as a process of spatio-temporal aggregation subject to continual change and carried out by innumerable agencies over a long period of time” (ibid.).

In this sense, Hillier interprets the physical environment as both the reflection and conveyor of social structure and interactions. Phenomenologically, this manner of expressing a people/environment connection needs rephrasing—not that built environment is social behavior and vice versa but, rather, that person is world, and world is person; that environment is experience, and experience is environment in the sense that particular environmental features (for example, a pathway network’s particular spatial configuration) contribute to and reflect the particular human worlds manifesting in a particular place.

Though he says little directly, Hillier is uncomfortable with the phenomenological vantage point on the people-world relationship. He seems minimally interested in detailing or understanding the everyday lived dynamics and events of particular places as spatial configuration may be their environmental foundation.

For example, he hopes to help urban designers to recreate lively cities and city districts marked by active street life and continuous “co-presence and co-awareness”—what over 40 years ago urban critic Jane Jacobs called the “street ballet.” He is minimally interested, however, in providing a detailed description of the street ballet’s lived everyday structure—what he calls the “urban buzz” and about which he suggests too many urban researchers understand only in a “romantic and mystical” way (p. 169). Rather, he seems to suggest that it is enough to understand the underlying configurational qualities of such vibrant urban places, specifically,

the co-incidence in certain locations of large numbers of different activities involving people going about their business in different ways. Such situations invariably arise through multi-

plier effects generated from the basic relation between space structure and movement, and ultimately this depends on the structure of the urban grid itself. In other words, how the urban system is put together spatially is the source of everything else (ibid.).

For the most part, Hillier’s understanding of co-presence and encounter in place is grounded in behaviors and aggregate measurements. As already suggested, he provides minimal probing of what these differences in behaviors and measurements actually mean for the particular pace, style, and tenor of everyday environmental and place experience.

Curiously, one exception in *Machine* is what Hillier calls a “thought experiment” in which he hypothetically reconstructs the typical pedestrian experience for an individual X who lives on an ordinary London working-class street vs. another individual Y who lives in a housing estate on a short upper walkway remote from a public street (see excerpt on next page).

Though rare in space syntax writings, such lived examples, grounded in everyday experience, help one much better understand why spatial configuration matters, though it is curious in this particular example that the contrasting place experiences that Hillier claims appear not to be documented through real-world evidence.

Such existential demonstration, particularly if grounded in *real* places and *real* place experiences of *real* people, would provide a lived concreteness missing from space syntax’s much more frequent aggregate generalizations garnered from quantitative evidence. In this sense, one potential phenomenological contribution to space syntax is detailed experiential descriptions of the contrasting kinds of co-presence, encounter, and lifeworlds that contrasting spatial configurations support or stymie.

For *EAP* readers, one of the most valuable aspects of *Space is the Machine* is Hillier’s critique of the place concept, which, he rightly argues, too often emphasizes a localist, one-point perspective that reduces the multidimensional complexity of urban place to the visual coherence of buildings, streets, and spaces comprising the urban environment.

Hillier makes conclusively clear that, ultimately, it is not an urban place’s local qualities but its *global pathway properties*, manifested through

pathway layout and degree of permeability, that are the foundation of that place's degree of vitality. Most efforts at place making, says Hillier, are unaware of these configurational qualities and the practical result is lifeless, empty districts. He writes:

The current preoccupation with 'place' seems no more than the most recent version of the urban designer's preference for the local and apparently tractable at the expense of the global and intractable in cities. However, both practical experience and research suggest that the preoccupation with local place gets priorities in the wrong order. Places are not local things. They are moments in large-scale things, the large-scale things we call cities. Places do not make cities. It is cities that make places. This distinction is vital. We cannot make places without understanding cities. Once again we find ourselves needing, above all, an understanding of the city as a functioning physical and spatial object (p. 151).

Hillier's work is so important because it demonstrates that any thinking and practice that does not understand the material and lived hermetic between physical and human worlds will necessarily fail. *Space Is the Machine* is an important step toward this understanding, though the book is complicated and probably difficult to follow if readers do not already have some knowledge of space syntax ideas. Gaining such knowledge is well worth the effort because place making will not be possible until thinkers and practitioners master Hillier's ideas and learn ways to apply them, through policy and design, to real places.

—David Seamon

From Hillier's *Space Is the Machine*: Traditional Street vs. Modernist Housing Estate, London

Imagine an individual, X, living on an ordinary London street. It is midday. X comes out of his or her front door. A stranger is about to pass by the door. Another is slightly farther away, but will also pass the door shortly. A third is passing in the opposite direction on the other side of the street.

In these circumstances, the presence of strangers seems natural. X even finds it reassuring. Certainly X does not approach the person passing the door and ask what he or she is doing here. If X did this, others would think X's behavior odd, even threatening. Unless there were special circumstances, someone might even send for the police if X persisted.

Now consider Y, who lives on a short upper-level walkway remote from the public street within a London housing estate. Like X, Y comes out of his or her front door and looks down the walkway. Suddenly a stranger appears round the corner in exactly the same position relative to Y's doorway as in the previous case the stranger was to X's.

Due to the local structure of the space [marked by much shorter pathways and thus minimal visual contact with the estate's larger pathway network]..., it is likely no one else is present. Unlike X, Y is

nervous and probably does one of two things: either Y goes back inside the dwelling, if that is easier, or if not asks the stranger if he is lost. The encounter is tense. Both parties are nervous. Y is being "territorial," defending local space, and the stranger is being asked for his "credentials."

Now the curious thing is that in the prevailing spatial circumstances, Y's behavior, which, if it had occurred on X's street, would have seemed bizarre, seems normal, even virtuous. In different environmental conditions, it seems, not only do we find different behaviors but different legitimizations of behavior. What is expected in one circumstance is read as bizarre in another.

So what exactly has changed? There seem to be two possibilities. First, the overall characteristics of the spatial configuration... has changed.... Second, Y's expectation of the presence of people has changed.

These two changes are strictly related to each other. Changes in spatial configuration produce, quite systematically, different natural patterns of presence and co-presence of people. People know this and make inferences about people from the configuration of the environment. An environment's

configuration therefore creates a pattern of normal expectation about people. These expectations guide our behavior. Where they are violated, we are uncomfortable, and behave accordingly. What is environmentally normal in one circumstance is unexpected in another....

The behavioral difference we have noted is therefore environmentally induced, not directly, but via the relation between configurational facts and configuration expectations.

One effect of this is that it can induce environmental fear, often to a greater degree than is justi-

fied by the facts of crime, because it takes the form of an inference from environment rather than from an actual presence of people.

It is these inferences from the structure of space to the pattern of probable co-presence that influence behavior and are also responsible for the high levels of fear that prevail in many housing estates. This is the fundamental reason that the urban normality of street-based systems usually seems relatively safer than most housing estates (pp. 190-91).

Direct Action and Fields of Care

J. Douglas Porteous

Educated at Oxford, Hull, Harvard and MIT, Porteous has taught for 35 years at British Columbia's University of Victoria. His twelve books span urban history, urban and regional planning, the development of Easter Island, environmental psychology, aesthetics, literary criticism and poetry. He writes: "A recent issue of EAP—especially your exemplary theme, 'the practice of a lived environmental ethic'—prompted me to write this short essay. Keep up the excellent work." Geography Department, University of Victoria, PO Box 3050, Victoria, BC V8W 3P5; 250-721-7327. © 2003 J. Douglas Porteous.

In a dying civilization, we have three choices. Many of us will accept common rapacity: the "culture of more" expressed in monster houses and SUV battlewagons. Others may retreat into physical isolation or quietist obsessions with art, literature or popular culture. The third option is to contest the culture of more. Although such a route is perhaps a losing proposition, it remains necessary; and going against the grain can provide an interesting, if not always comfortable, way of life.

Three major modes of contestation are: (1) to create or disseminate ideas that oppose the primitive tropes of business culture and open new vistas of a saner world; (2) to work politically to ameliorate or overturn the structures of the corporate state; and (3) to involve oneself in direct action.

In the last two decades, I've written two pairs of books that take the first course. *Planned to Death*

(1989) and *Domicide: the Global Destruction of Home* (2001) illuminate the negative effects of the corporate and militarist state on our dwelling places and propose remedies both mainstream and extreme. *Landscapes of the Mind* (1990) and *Environmental Aesthetics: Ideas, Politics and Planning* (1996) demonstrate the satisfactions gained from the light-footprint environmental intangibles: attachment, aesthetics, ethics, and spirituality.

As I don't have the personality for political work, I go straight from conceptual theory to direct action. Apart from the personal direct action of changing one's life to create a lighter footprint, public direct action is a coin with two sides. The invaluable underside is monkey wrenching, as advocated by Edward Abbey and practised by Earth First! The other side of the coin involves choosing and embracing fields of care, taking responsibility

for tracts of land and cherishing them.

Home is where one starts from. All my fields of care are close to home. At its simplest, care involves the maintenance of an existing landscape. Here I have joined others in the care of an ancient churchyard (containing graves of my extended family) in the East Riding of Yorkshire; an inner city backyard in Victoria B.C.; and the destoning and dethistling (by scythe) of a horse and sheep pasture on British Columbia's Saturna Island. The last evoked the following verse:

DRAGONS' TEETH

I lust to handle that sharp shiny snake
quivering in my grip
swathe after swathe.

As thistles fall, boulders appear,
then rocks, then pebbles.

Hoist them away! Build walls,
cairns, rockpiles, terraces!
Unscale the land!
Find soil!
But earth births fragments faster far
than families can fling.

More challenging is the creation of a new landscape. The development of a one-acre forest glade within a conifer wood took me about five years, mostly using hand tools (a good machete can bring down big softwood saplings). Once created, the meadow is not mine (I don't own it). Rather, it and its inhabitants (deer, otter, racoon, frogs, salamanders and others) have claims on me. To paraphrase the Little Prince, one is responsible, forever, for what one has changed.

But restoring native landscapes is better still. The three sites I have attempted are all on sea cliffs. First, I de-gardened my own small plot on Saturna Island, discouraging exotics and encouraging natives such as spotted coral root orchid, flowering currant, ocean spray, salal and arbutus, which form under stories to the massive Douglas fir and western red cedar.

Once satisfied with my procedures, I moved on

to the de-brooming of parts of two public parks. Scotch broom—an invasive species brought to distant Vancouver Island by sentimental Scots—easily reaches ten feet in height in this mild climate, enveloping and destroying native plants.

The first park area is a well-visited couple of acres of headland, backed by forest, with a continuous fringe of broom. By de-brooming the headland, FLOS (Flower Liberators of Saturna) has promoted the spread of sea-cliff turflands, in which grow previously suppressed native species such as fawn lilies, chocolate lilies, Indian paint brush, and the calypso orchid. A rough ugly "Scotland" has been turned into something that satisfies both those who wish the restoration of native ecosystems and those who relish Mansfield Park.

My main work, however, has been on a secluded couple of acres in a seaside park in Victoria. This glaciated cliff, the south-facing shatter side of a monadnock, was smothered in high broom when I began. Dwarf oaks and arbutus struggled to survive below the broom canopy. Five years later much of the broom is gone (although I'm aware that broom seeds can survive 30 years before germination), and the Garry oak ecosystem is recovering, with its dwarf trees, grassy minimeadows, Nootka roses, animals and birds, including Anna, Canada's resident hummingbird species.

No new morals can be derived from this story. We knew it all in kindergarten. Possessions possess; better to be possessed by the claims of landscapes. Stewardship is pleasure. It's good to be grounded. Known places, imbrued with one's sweat, become homes. Individual plants and birds are recognized, like family, year after year. Perhaps better than writing exhortatory books, there's the joy of balancing the books of nature. Complementary to foreign travel is the urge to travel within these books of nature, slowly and close to the ground.

Best of all, the caring responsibility is endless, in the sense of all-continuing. I know I'll be looking after these landscapes as long as I'm able. And I find that a few people, intrigued by this private work in public places, come to help. Meanwhile, there's the process: travelling and, hopefully, never arriving.

Travel Drawing: Engaging the Spirit of Place

Tim White

White teaches in the School of Architecture at Florida A & M University in Tallahassee. A slightly different version of this essay was originally published in the fall 2001 issue of Opportunities: Newsletter of the Design Communication. © 2003 Tim White, including all drawings.

This essay is about the rituals of travel drawing. About how visual journaling processes can help engage place spirit at the locales where we sketch. About how ways we draw may deepen our intimacy with and reverence for place.

When enacted mindfully, the drawing process is occasion for personal introspection, reflection on our inner emotional and spiritual life. And an opportunity to fully feel the joy and satisfaction of crafting well, of managing a process to completion and product, and of fond, vivid memories.

Travel sketching is considered a recreational form of drawing. More entertainment than serious pursuit of high stakes intentions. It should be fun, light, and easy. We look here at some additional values of sketching on the road. To benefits of drawing with more awareness of what's happening on paper, inside us, and between ourselves and drawing subject.

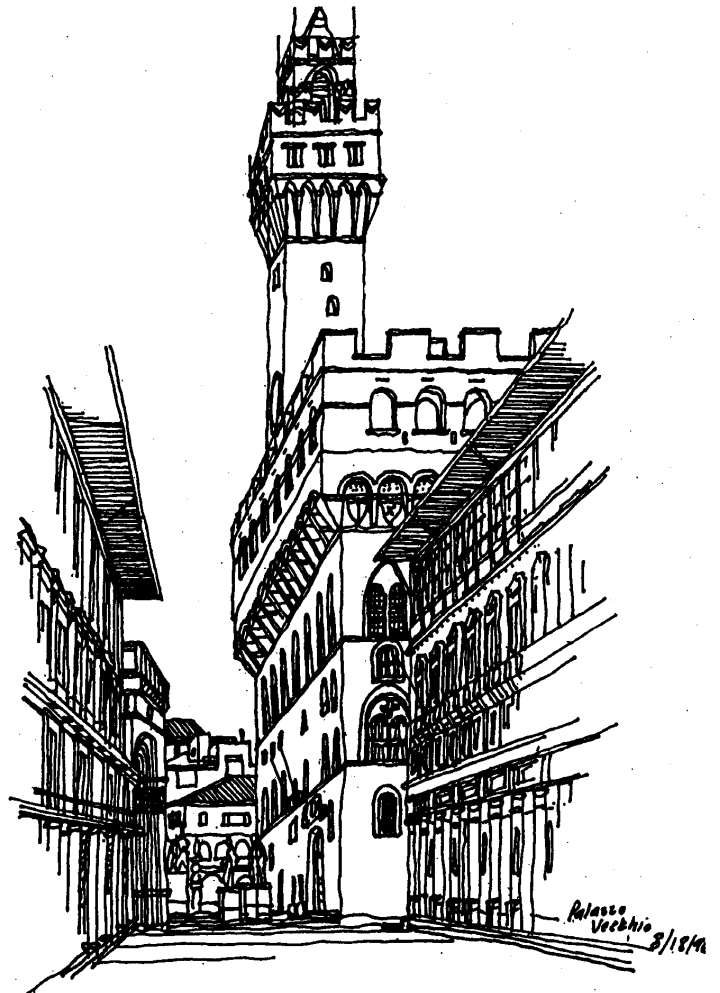
Spirit of Place

What is spirit of place? Spirit has to do with essence, soul, defining attributes, life-giving principles, underlying animating structure. What gives a place its core and center of gravity? That which, if altered or taken away, would change the place fundamentally into something else.

Sketching a place's spirit involves drawing what counts and in a way that conveys the place's identity and character. To engage, through sketching process, that which is signature, that which permeates and infuses place. What embodies place spirit? Represents or holds its essence? What stands for the

whole? Should we draw all of what's there? A section of it? A detail or fragment or vignette? A doorway? Fountain? Alleyway? Building elevation?

Spirit may be embodied in architecture and surfaces. In the quality of light. It may be in the place's spatial volume or scenery. Spirit may not reside in



the physicality, materiality of place but in its people and activity. Who's there and what are they doing? Where and when?

A single yearly event may best express place spirit. Atmosphere and ambience may be seat of spirit. Weather, noise, crowdedness, peace, celebration, high energy can be what place is about. Sometimes, place essence is nested in a locale's history, its story and genealogy. Or encountered through experiences such as eating a meal, visiting a museum, or climbing a tower. Spirit may be found in place's name, reputation, or some fact or statistic.

The litany of possibilities raises the prospect that place spirit may be plural, not singular. Personal and idiosyncratic rather than public and communal, shared. Perhaps as much constructed as found. The point is to draw what interests us, what says something about place essence, and what will result in sketches that are a joy to make, look at, and remember our visit by.

When traveling, we often have much time to discern a place's spirit. Even a little pre-sketch time spent in locale is helpful. Sit there awhile. Walk around. Have a coffee. Open all the senses. Look, listen, feel. Smell and taste the food. Touch surfaces. Feel body move. Walk a ways down the feeder paths and then return to experience entry from all directions. Engage people. Buy something. Enter shops, church, museum, cloister. Get wet at the fountain. Read about the place, preferably in the place. How have historians, novelists, travel writers treated it, described it? Sense of place spirit is acquired and refined with exposure and experience.

Drawing Rituals

The term ritual suggests that our sketching decisions and actions can be elevated from half-aware routines to mindful processes deliberately performed. Perhaps even to a spiritual practice. Careful attention and conscious awareness are necessary to harvest full benefits of the sketching opportunity.

What are some of the rituals of travel drawing? They begin even before we start to sketch. Thinking about the place we want to draw. Getting there. Experience arrival, preferably on foot. Spending time before sketching to take in place's feel, to understand what it's about. Selecting a drawing subject

and posing it by finding a favorable sketching angle and distance. Searching out a suitable drawing place, setting up and settling in.

Gazing at subject to discover its organizing principles, its secret structure and regulating lines. Entering minds of its designer and builder. Choosing a center of sketch interest and then composing, cropping, editing, imagining drawing scope and configuration. Enlisting subject's context and entourage to shape drawing and honor center of interest. Visualizing completed sketch on paper. Its size, placement, and graphic character. Finding a subject element to begin the drawing. Our first best marks. Something to set the drawing scale and placement on paper and to serve as a measuring reference for estimating and drawing and remaining subject and sketch elements. Choose a light direction. Imagining the sketch building process. The layers of effort.

All of this happens before we put pen to paper. Then comes making the marks, feeling the materials. Moving from subject's major elements to nuance and subtlety. Sensing subject come through us. Dance of looking, drawing, checking, adjusting, looking again. Glancing ahead in mind's eye to next marks. Negotiating twists and turns, complications, obstacles, and openings of sketch building.

Disengagement, leaving process are as important as arrival. Sitting a moment with subject and sketch. Regarding the place again with full open attention to the whole. Galvanizing sensations, solidifying memories. Feeling our leaving and turning for one last look before exit.

Turning routine activities of arrival, set up, preparation, drawing, packing up and departure into deliberate ceremonies intensifies drawing experience and memories. Transformation of intention and demeanor from hurried preoccupation with drawing product to slower paced reverence for process engenders higher regard for drawing subject and finer grained, more satisfying kinship with place. Drawing becomes an opportunity for introspection and interior refinement.

From Tourist to Pilgrim

To *tourist*, place is trophy, acquisition, possession, achievement. Something to be consumed, collected. Worn like a badge. Hung on a wall. Mentioned at

cocktail parties. Place may even be irritation, obstacle, problem when it causes delays in clipping through an itinerary.

To *traveler*, place is experience, occasion, action. Process, unfoldment, life. Enjoyed, savored, appreciated for its own sake. Preparing for, getting to, dwelling in. Becoming, being. Mindful engagement of nuance, detail. Journey cherished as much as destination.

To *pilgrim*, place is culmination. Keeping a sacred promise. Trip, approach, arrival, threshold, entry. Reaching center. Being there. Grace and gratitude. Passage and place elevated to sacrament by pilgrim's elevated intention and disposition. Reverence, affection replace coarser orientations of less-inspired visitors.

To *citizen*, place is equipment. Container, scene, setting for living life. Moving through a day. Getting things done. Environment for churn and buzz of urban vitality. Paths, portals, places interwoven with whole of organic civic tapestry. Natural extensions of human dreams and pursuits. Aspects of citizen's sense of belonging, pride of place.

Travel sketching slows down pace. Invites us to spend time in one place carefully looking at one thing. Tourist orientation transforms to pilgrim orientation. Brushing by a place, taking a photo on the run, checking place off our list with mind already occupied with next list item shifts to sitting, beholding, being with. Fleeting glance becomes steady gaze. Consumer becomes citizen. Movement from superficial familiarity to deep appreciation and intimate knowing. Investment in relationship between knower and known.

When we draw a subject, we touch it with our perceptual processes. Send out attention to meet and engage the subject and bring it into us through our senses. We ingest and metabolize place. It is in us. It is us. It's in our marrow, muscles, wiring. And we are in it. Our attention, intention, regard, reverence and on and in the place. They have magically fused with subject's cells and soul. Both place and we are changed through the encounter. Subject comes through us onto paper. Through senses, mind, muscles, drawing instrument to drawing surface. Eye, mind, and hand movements trace and merge with subject elements and attributes. And subject dances

with us, moving to meet and mirror drawing intentions.

We are tempted to believe that the relationship between drawing product and drawing subject is the most important dialog in this process. Faithfulness and accuracy of the drawing vis-à-vis its representation of and congruence with place attributes. How well sketch has captured subject's image and spirit. Although making of the drawing is ostensible reason and purpose of encounter, it is epiphenomenon to relationship between place and ourselves. Enactment of drawing rituals and sketch making are occasions for processes to occur in us and between us and subject that are much more lasting, profound, and meaningful than sketch itself. Hidden metamorphoses in quality, depth, and value of our connections with place. Evolution from cool acquaintance to dear friend. Surface knowing to fine disclosure. Private exchange of secrets.

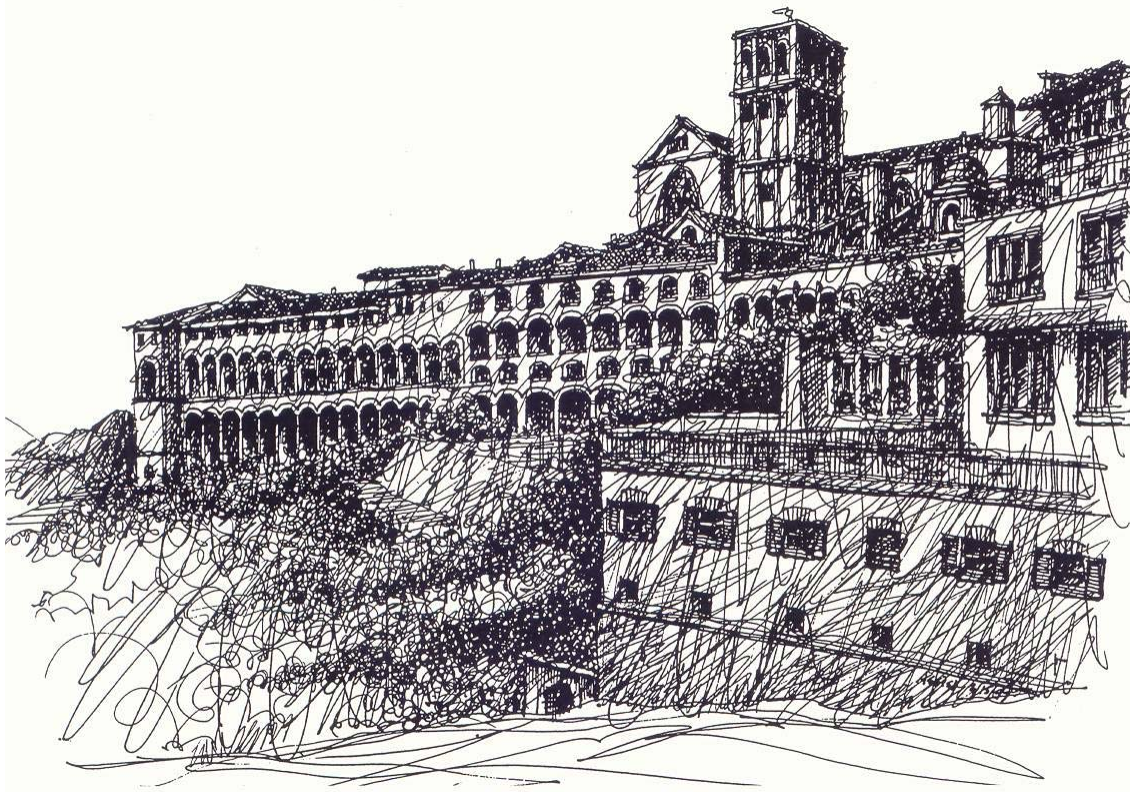
Knowing Places at Finer Levels

Close intimacy is a kind of knowing laced with reverence and emotional investment. There are many ways of knowing a place at finer levels, of which travel drawing involves us in four.

Experiential knowing happens when we are in a place often. When we spend time there. Use place as citizens. Go to plays. Have coffee. Eat meals. Visit galleries. Shop at stores. Buy papers at newsstands. Strolling, sitting, people watching. We know place intimately, not from special study but simply by being there.

We have breathed it in, soaked it up, immersed ourselves in it, touched all of it, and experienced its full range of personalities. Place is second nature to us. We know it, not in sharp light of consciousness but instinctively, viscerally, intuitively. A kind of accelerated experiential knowing happens with travel sketching. Intensified attention motivated by desire to understand place and its spirit and by elevated alertness demanded by drawing process.

Analytical knowing comes from carefully and systematically looking at particular place aspects. Conducting formal or informal studies to search below surface appearance and behind common experience for reasons, causes, generating forces. Measuring, mapping, interviewing, photographing, video-



taping are examples. Looking for patterns, hidden relationships, statistics. Methodical looking, listening with particular learning goals in mind.

An analytical orientation is central to travel sketching. Becoming familiar with place prior to drawing it, and drawing process itself put us in an analytical mode. We move from diffuse general appreciation of a building to a focused, purposeful search for its generative ordering principals, figure-ground patterns, regulating lines. We attend to big and small shapes, edges, alignments, details, proportional relationships.

Poetic knowing occurs with an artful, intuitive, indirect approach to understanding place and place spirit. Looking away, then looking back at place with different eyes. Engaging place through filters that reconfigure the obvious, routine, and expected into surprising, strange, inspiring. Summoning concepts of compactness, density, economy, incisiveness, transparency, layered meaning to construct and access place secrets not accessible to logic and rational routes. Creative application of displacement and indirection of metaphor. Employing freedom of fiction to shape place differently. Playfully engaging the unlikely story configuration of myth and legend about place.

These orientations to knowing place transform ordinary to extraordinary. What was close fitting, stable, inevitable becomes uncoupled, floating, free and full of new potential. Subtle clues to place spirit are amplified. Hiding essences coaxed out. A new reality constructed and discovered. Travel sketching is poetic knowing. Hard stone and marble magically transmuted to ink and paper. Place is disassembled, interpreted, and reconstituted. The sketch is not a photo-

graph but a new invention made from imagination about drawing subject and making incisive marks that reach toward essence. Drawing economy, transparency to place spirit, and revelation of place secrets are core to the graphic fiction of travel sketching.

Historical/factual knowing involves reading about the place. Becoming a student of place story, history, genealogy. Important events, dates, people impart significance and weight to place and place components. How did the place evolve and why is it this way now? What were its original reasons for being and the historical tensions and compressions that shaped it through time? In what ways is place a printout of natural and human process?

Reading about a place is not essential to the mechanics of drawing production, so it may be easy to consider it superfluous to travel sketching. It is, however, key to a sincere search for place spirit. Coming to, entering, being in, and drawing a place are richer, fuller experiences when done in the context of historical/factual knowing. This kind of knowing finds expression in the energy, character and quality of the sketching process and finished drawing.

Alchemy of Craft

There is an emotional and spiritual dimension to travel sketching. A third domain of drawing to complement theory and technique. This affective aspect is the secret life of the sketch. The hidden, contemplative, private component of drawing that happens within us as the outer, observable actions of sketching take place. Sketching is an opportunity for personal introspection and evolution.

The idea of alchemy is used here because many of the tenets of this ancient pursuit are useful in explaining ideas about the inner work that happens while the outer work of drawing is going on. Processes of inner craft mirroring efforts to craft the sketch.

There is magic, even divinity, in making. Something totally new is conceived, formed, birthed. Brought from non-being to being. From nothing to entity, event. Scattered, unshaped material moved by intention and will to order, identity, life. Maker is co-partner with divine in the mystery and wonder of creating. And in this partnership maker is, for the making moment, made divine. Lifted to another level of being.

Alchemy of craft is a mystical equation. A congruence between outer effort to shape the sketch with physical hands that shape our interior life. Beauty crafted outside creates beauty inside. Vision, lofty intention, sincere care and caress in drawing impart similar qualities to artist's spirit. The lesson from alchemy is to participate in sketching rituals in ways that feed, nurture, cultivate, and polish our larger being.

Meaningful sketching works on us, in us, at several levels. At the level of mind and will, drawing demands and focuses presence, patience, and perseverance. Presence is staying in the moment. Totally focused and committed. Being here, being now. Patience is allowing, permitting. Letting drawing and life unfold at their own pace, in their own way and time.

At the level of heart and spirit, sketching cultivates integrity, intensity, intimacy. Integrity is coming authentically out of our truth, our core beliefs. Living from who we essentially are. Being sincere in our expression of personal values. Consistent in

outer life and inner life. Striving in each choice and undertaking to grow toward fullest personal potential as a unique, living event in the universe. Intensity is no regrets, no excuses, all out commitment to our best work. Total energy and being concentrated on the task at hand. Ability to push distraction and diversion aside. Intimacy is openness, personal disclosure, courage to begin and to fail. A confident sense of self-worth and healthy self-possession comfortable with discomfort, even danger.

There are precious points during drawing when we are lost in our work. The sketching process becomes meditation, prayer. One pointed concentration on one task filling full mind horizon. Nothing else exists in these pure awareness passages. Time becomes the eternal moment. Mental space occupied with a single intention filling and feeding us in sacred, secret ways. Soulscape nurtured by the practice of solitude, silence. Discernment and incisiveness made more muscular by denser, thicker, heavier kind of attention. Discipline deepened by radical exercise of sitting still. Drawing meditation does not dampen sensitivities but hones them. Making us more acutely aware of our surroundings when interruptions and distractions puncture the fragile singularity of drawing task and pull us back to swirl and swish of place activity and larger environment.

Ideas of alchemy about death and rebirth, accelerated evolution of natural processes, transformation of base metal into precious metal, distillation and purity, and philosopher's stone can be illuminating epiphanies about drawing's inner work. Dying to old self through sketching discipline to make room for new self to emerge. Pushing nature's pace by engaging in drawing rituals that speed up inner growth. Turning mindfulness into elevated sensitivities to life by intense sketching attention. Converting complex and ephemeral reality into incorruptible economy and essence. Purifying intention by willing one thing. Searching for the elusive key to unlock secrets of place and self.

These are all aspects of the inner work that happens when we engage the spirit of place with drawing rituals. When we seek to marry place's spirit with our spirit