

Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

Vol. 1, No. 3

Fall 1990

Please note that this is the last issue of *EAP* for 1990. We planned to produce three issues and, with your help, we have succeeded. This issue is the longest of the year. We received a considerable amount of material and wanted to publish as much as possible.

Also please remember that *all readers' subscriptions end with this current issue*. We have provided a renewal form on the last page. If you would like to receive *EAP* in 1991, please return the form along with \$5 (\$7.00 foreign). We will continue to receive a subsidy from EDRA, but ask all EDRA members who wish to continue receiving the newsletter to return the renewal form, noting that you are an EDRA member.

The renewal form asks about other individuals who might be interested in *EAP*. If you think of anyone, please list his or her name and address, and we will send a complimentary newsletter.

This issue includes regular features on publications and events as well as coverage of the annual Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) meetings held in May at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. We also publish part 2 of a review of Thomas Thiis-Evensen's *Archetypes in Architecture*, an important contribution to a phenomenology of architectural form and experience.

We conclude with sociologist Anne Vittoria's recollections of a house in which she formerly lived. This text strikingly illustrates how descriptions of personal experience can be used as a foundation for more conceptualized phenomenological interpretation.

As always, we remind you of the importance of interpersonal exchange in phenomenological and other qualitative research. Please send us news, comments, queries, ideas, reflections, and so forth. We need your contributions.

CALL FOR PAPERS: SACRED SPACES AND ENVIRONMENT

The scholarly journal *Environments* will publish a special issue on "sacred spaces and environments" in late 1991. The editors seek papers that deal with both traditional and modern-day places and that represent a range of disciplines and points of view. The prospectus says in part: "For many, the notion of *sacred* is inevitably associated with places of worship, where sacred and secular spaces and environments are clearly demarcated. It may be argued, however, that all spaces can be made sacred; sanctity is brought to them by human care and imagination as it is taken away by their lack....The value accorded to sacred spaces and environments has been a cornerstone of most societies. Is this value, in some form or another, also a hidden element of modern culture?"

For information, write: Catherine Elstone, *Environments*, Faculty of Environmental Studies, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G1 Canada.

WINDOWS AS EXPERIENCE

One of Thiis-Evensen's strengths is lucid descriptions of architecture's existential expression. Here are some of his comments on windows:

- "While the door is determined by its relation to what is outside, the window is the symbol of what is inside."
- "Like an eye, it expresses the interior's outlook over exterior space..."
- "an expression of the interior to the world at large.... windows...announce our mode of life."
- "It is invariably the 'struggle' between interior space and exterior space which the window expresses, a question of whether the interior seems to be drawn outwards or whether it remains protected within the dividing wall."

EDRA MEETINGS, 1990

The 21st annual meeting of the Environmental Design Research Association was held April 6-9, 1990 at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. The Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology network met for Saturday lunch, and 10 people were present. Co-chairs Margaret Boschetti and David Seamon, with the help of Robert Mugerauer, led the meeting. The major topic of discussion was what projects the EAP network might sponsor in regard to what organizations and events.

Discussion was unstructured, and the main decision made was that the EAP newsletter should continue to be the central effort of the network. It was also suggested that EAP sponsor sessions at upcoming meetings and conferences, including the next EDRA meetings, which will be held near Mexico City in March, 1991.

What follows are the notes from the meeting as recorded by Margaret Boschetti. We also include landscape architect Patrick Condon's introductory commentary given at a symposium on "Phenomenology of Place and Landscape."

- Could there be a session that would present phenomenology phenomenologically? Perhaps there might be a particular theme around which people could describe their experiences. Could participants go out into a place or environment and work to experience it directly and offer phenomenological observations? Why is it that conference sessions are always "inside"?
- How can the network contribute to seeing in a more multifaceted way? What are "impressions" and how are they gathered?
- What about some sort of performance--e.g., a dance--as a way of sharing experience and providing a focus for reflection and discussion?
- How do we see? How do we express what we see? How could performance and graphic representation contribute to seeing?
- Is there a phenomenological graphics?
- What distinguishes phenomenology as a way of knowing? In one sense, there are three stages: seeing, interpreting, expressing.

Discovering underlying patterns.

- How do we make accurate word pictures? Story telling as a possibility. How to give an image, an impression? Creating an "armature" like the base the sculptor uses to create form. The need to deal with the concrete--not abstractions.
- The use of students' experiences as a base for classroom learning: "If we could all tell our true story and not be embarrassed, it would be amazing how much we could learn from each other!" (E. Ostrander).
- Allowing the thing to be: "Respect the person, respect the story--let the truth come out the way it is, not trying to categorize or box it" (G. Day).

DESIGN SPIRIT

As an interest in both ecology and self-awareness continues to grow, there are many new attempts to create environmental designs that harmonize human and ecological needs. One significant effort is the new mass-circulation journal *Design Spirit*, founded and edited by architect Suzanne Koblentz-Goodman.

Design Spirit emphasizes architecture and environmental design that is sound ecologically and also uplifts the spirit. The winter 1990 issue includes articles and a book review as well as information on resources and organizations. The feature article is a review of the NMB Bank in Amsterdam, designed by Amsterdam architects Ton Alberts and Max Van Huut. The building has been hailed by critics as "an inspired harbinger for a more ecologically-sound, more humanistically-balanced future."

Design Spirit is particularly valuable as a clearing house for innovative ideas and designs that seek to heal the schisms between human experience and the natural world and between materialism and spirituality. The journal is published three times a year, and a subscription is \$15.00. Write to: *Design Spirit*, 438 Third Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215-9938.

DESIGN SPIRIT

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO LANDSCAPE, PLACE AND DESIGN

Patrick Condon

Editors' note: As chair and commentator for the EDRA symposium on "Phenomenological Approaches to Landscape and Place," landscape architect Patrick Condon presented the following introduction. Papers in the session were by Robert Mugerauer and David Seamon.

Both papers in this symposium offer some rules for good design. The presenters use "qualitative" methods to come up with these rules. Quite understandably, these methods conform with the presenters' beliefs stated in the abstract for this symposium: "Certain dimensions of the environment and environmental experience cannot be determined exactly and are better explored and identified through verbal and graphic descriptions."

For this session to be more worthwhile, I ask you to ponder this assertion before we begin because this statement is very important. Might I suggest that embedded in it are at least two critical implications:

First: When it is said that there are certain things that "cannot be determined exactly," the suggestion is made that many critical aspects of living in the world are not available for measurement.

This implication relates to a question that has resisted solution since people first asked, "Who am I?" "What am I?" "Why am I here?"¹ More precisely, this implication brings reference to the "mind/body problem"--i.e., which is more "real," the corporeal matter of my body or the ethereal images of my mind? For Mugerauer, Seamon and other scholars who use qualitative methods, it is not a question of mind or body. Rather, the mind and the physical world are a fused whole--a "lifeworld" that is neither matter nor mind but constituted of the relationship between the two. Given that environmental-design research is critically concerned with the interaction between human perception (mind) and its container (the physical world), a method rooted in a philosophy that locates the "real" as the intersection between consciousness and the physical world seems especially suitable.

Second: The reference to "certain dimensions of

environment and environmental experience" implies certain important aspects of living in the world that should not be ignored simply because they are unmeasurable.

Often, our modern Western culture assumes that if something cannot be weighed, measured, or counted, it therefore does not exist. Most problems that our culture confronts--whether, technical, social, economic or environmental--are approached "scientifically" in the belief that "good science" can solve virtually all problems. Those who call their method "phenomenological" take a more skeptical stance with regard to science.² These scholars believe that many critical aspects of living in the world are "inaccessible to the highly abstract and selective methods of science."³ These researchers argue that "scientism"--the indiscriminate application of scientific methods to all questions--"is a particular case of alienation or objectification which deprives man of his human reality and makes him confuse himself with things."⁴

One can rightfully ask, however, if the product of phenomenological inquiry has no generalizable utility for the purpose of improving designed environments, is it not a waste of time? As a partial answer to this complaint, Mugerauer and Seamon present their efforts to "define," in practical terms, what they admit to be the "indefinite" quality of human experience.

Therefore, and finally, the basic question that the two presentations raise and that we might later discuss is this: *To what extent and through what means may the indefinite be defined?*

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Notes

¹I am indebted to Michael Brill for his emphasis on these "first questions."

²Here, I use "science" to mean the search for knowledge via that set of principles and procedures known collectively as the "scientific method," which is designed to limit and to control the number and type of variables subject to analysis, to establish specific and reproducible experimental procedures, and to confirm validity through the repeatable and generalizable nature of results. This modern definition of science is distinct from the older, but now moribund, definition--i.e. any deliberate quest for knowing.

³Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1963).

⁴G. Luckacs, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*, "Die Verdinglichung und das Bewusstsein in des Proletariats" (Berlin, 1923).

PUBLICATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & MEETINGS

The Humanistic Psychologist is the journal of the Division of Humanistic Psychology of the American Psychological Association. In the last three years, editor Christopher Aanstoos has made the journal one of the most stimulating forums for humanistic, phenomenological, hermeneutical, and postmodern thought. Recent contributors include David Levin, Maurice Friedman, Bernd Jager, and David Seamon, whose "Humanistic and Phenomenological Advances in Environmental Design" is the seventh article in a continuing *HP* series on "Foundations in the Human Sciences." This series has also included review articles on deep ecology and humanistic geography. \$15/year for three issues and well worth it. Write: Christopher Aanstoos, Psychology Department, West Georgia College, Carrollton, Georgia 30118.

Founded in 1973, **Planet Drum Foundation** is a clearing house for practical and conceptual work on bioregions, especially grass-roots efforts. The Foundation publishes *Raise the Stakes*, a biannual review that features bioregional news, articles, reviews, events, and contacts. Membership is \$15/year. Address: Planet Drum, P. O. Box 31251, San Francisco, California 94131.

Environmental ethics continues to be one of the most significant scholarly cutting edges in terms of a more complete understanding of the person-environment relationship. One important new venture is the **International Society for Environmental Ethics**, which publishes a newsletter and organizes gatherings at professional meetings. The first issue of the newsletter is 13 pages of "general announcements," "papers and materials," "recent titles," "events, and "issues." A gold mine of information and very much recommended. To become a member, send \$10 (\$5, student) to: Prof. Laura Westra, Philosophy Department, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4, Canada.

The Canadian Society for Hermeneutics and Postmodern Thought is a five-year-old interdisciplinary forum for discussion of Continental Thought and related interpretive traditions. CSH publishes *Bulletin*, a quarterly newsletter that includes conference news, book reviews, citations, and announcements. CSH and EAP exchange newsletters. Membership is \$20/year (\$10, student), payable January 1. Address: CSH/SCH, Philosophy Department, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G 2W1.

The International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments announces its second annual meeting, "First World/Third World: Duality and Coincidence in Traditional Dwellings and Settlements." The conference will be held at the University of California, Berkeley, October 4-7, 1990. Deadline for papers has passed, but information on attending the conference can be had from: IASTE Conference, 390 Wurster Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA. 94720 (415-642-2896).

V. Frank Chaffin, 1989. *Dwelling, and Rhythm: The Isle Brevelle as a Landscape of Home*, " *Landscape Journal*, 8, 96-106.

If one gave awards for the best phenomenological articles of 1989, this essay by landscape architect V. Frank Chaffin would surely make the list. Chaffin's aim is to explore "the interplay between human dwelling and the rhythms of nature as manifested on the Isle Brevelle, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana" (p. 41). His conceptual vehicle for this exploration is simple but powerful: to move from outside to inside this 200-year-old island community, first, by presenting its history and geography; then by talking with its residents and trying to understand what this place means for them; and, finally, by canoeing the Cane River, which he comes to realize is "the focus of the community-at-home-and-at-large" (p. 41).

As he canoed along the river, he became "aware of a rhythm of water, topography, vegetation, and human settlement along its banks: a play of containment and release inherent in the land that is respected and enhanced by the peoples' acts of building. I realize that the resonance or correspondence between a place and the lives upon it is the 'whole' of dwelling, not just an aspect; and that the designer--the stranger--can experience dwelling directly, clearly a way for future design to resonate" (p. 41).

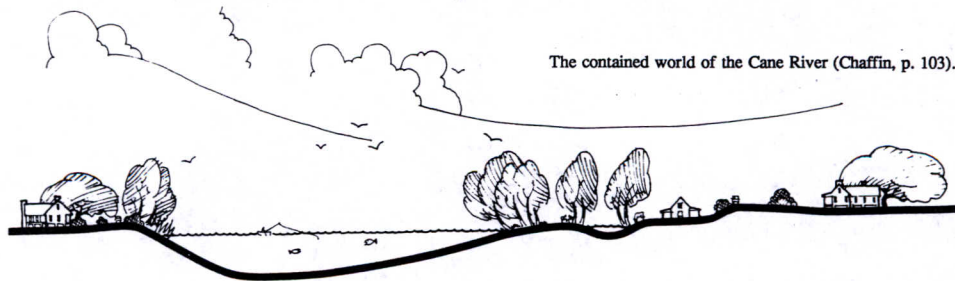
The box presents Chaffin's full verbal description of his canoeing experience. Below is one of his efforts to crystalize graphically the world of the river and Isle Brevelle. This essay has a powerful effect on students and provides a heartfelt introduction to sense of place and dwelling. Very much recommended, especially for undergraduates.

Once on the water, the earlier feelings of alienation and intrusion were gone. I came directly in contact with a spatial rhythm. As the valley's horizon is formed by the surrounding sand hills, so the river's horizon is formed by the batture [the land that slopes up from a waterway to the top of a natural or artificial levee], silhouetted against the sky when viewed from a canoe. I had the paradoxical sensation of being both high and low at the same time; held down between the banks, yet as high as the surrounding fields.

The meanders of the once-wild current organized this experience. As I paddled around the bends the rhythm unfolded. On the outside of the curve, I was contained by a steep bank, emphasized by red cedar sentinels. Only rooftops and cars passing along the river road hinted at a world beyond. On the inside, I was released into a riverside world of inlets, peninsulas, and undulating banks softened by black willows, some even growing directly from the water on submerged bars; the shallow edge was further softened by yellow flag and Louisiana iris and American lotus.

As the curves changed direction, the containment and release offered by the two sides of the river altered in turn and, in "my own little world" of the river everything seemed to fit. . . .

V. Frank Chaffin, p. 102



The contained world of the Cane River (Chaffin, p. 103).

NOTEWORTHY PUBLICATIONS

Edward Relph, 1989. *Responsive Methods, Geographical Imagination and the Study of Landscapes*. In A. Kobayashi & S. MacKenzie, eds. *Remaking Human Geography*, Boston: Unwin Hyman, pp. 149-163.

This geographer discusses the value of "responsive methods" for studying landscapes and places, which, by their very nature, are "vital and subtle things, filled with specific significance and incapable of exact delimitation or definition" (p. 149). The need is a way of seeing, thinking and describing--what Relph calls "responsive methods"--to allow places and landscapes to reveal themselves, as freely as they can, in an accurate, complete way. Relph says that these methods might also be called "phenomenological" or "artistic." Their procedural core is that they adapt themselves "to the form and character of the subject" (p. 150).

The majority of the essay explores practical examples of responsive methods by considering: (1) ways of seeing, (2) ways of thinking, and (3) ways of describing. A final section of the essay discusses the theoretical and practical value of responsive methods. Relph writes: "An important consequence of seeing clearly and directly is that should you then try to change the world in some way at least you will do it from knowledge which is based on your own experience. It is all too easy to follow intellectual fashions, or to work with abstract models, and then to impose these on to places and environments encountered only vicariously through a haze of words or statistics or formulae" (p. 161).

A motivating introduction to phenomenological seeing, describing, and understanding. A good beginning for phenomenologically-oriented field courses.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

James A. Russell, a national Research Fellow at the University of Tasmania, is doing work on "A Consolidated Theoretical Approach to Cultural Resource Management and Nature Conservation in

Australia." One of his concerns is how a phenomenology of place provides deeper insight for environmental planning and policy. His aim is to contribute to a "new environmental consciousness" that would respect the natural integrity and wholeness of the environment.

In mid-1991 he plans to visit several innovative environmental-management programs, including France's "ecomuseums" and Britain's national parks that are working examples of natural and historic landscape conservation. He would welcome suggestions and contacts. Address: Center for Environmental Studies, GPO Box 252C, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania 7001, Australia.

Evelyn Dunn Koblentz is a philosopher and author of *Rethinking Being*. She writes: "Your publication heralds a transition to a much-needed new perspective in all fields of thought. I am intrigued by the good to which you are putting Heideggerian philosophy, using it as a perspective from which to illuminate the ways that human being experiences its sense of Being, through the natural/man-built environment. My positive reaction to this application of Heidegger's phenomenology underscores the importance of keeping an open mind toward a body of thought with which one finds fault, taking care to salvage the viable from the unrealized. It now is clear that Heidegger's unquestionable brilliance lies in his phenomenology, rather than in his metaphysics.

"My book, *Rethinking Being: A Cosmic Perspective*, is a metaphysical system, which includes a metaphysical critique of *Being and Time*. It is ironic that Heidegger's thinking is helping to uncover and to evoke the Being of natural and man-made entities, since, in his initial explication of Being, he explicitly excluded entities, per se, as unworthy of being considered alongside Dasein. This decision is the key reason why his metaphysical explication of Being harbors the same duality that plagues traditional Western philosophy, which he thought he had overcome. The companion volume to *Being and Time*, which was to have explicated being in general, never was written. In a way, your group is doing that explication,

successfully, because your thinking dismisses divisiveness between human being and being in general.

"With the use of its own techniques, I have also deconstructed deconstruction. What becomes clear is that deconstruction is based on the same paradigm of Being that underlies the traditional Western philosophy that Derrida thinks he has undermined, and that Heidegger thought he had brought to completion. My objection is not to Derrida's conclusion that Being cannot be derived from the realm of ideation, but to his dictum that, therefore, Being is not accessible at all to the human mind. This absolute severance of mind from real Being, constituting an unbridgeable gap between ideation and what it transcends ideationally, releases rationality from responsibility to its moorings in the whole of what-is, and frees it to function irrationally as a 'loose cannon.'

"Heidegger and Derrida, each in his own way, erred in excluding the real from their bodies of thought. What is so commendable about your group's approach to Being is your basic premise, articulated to varying degrees, that ideation and the real are inseparable components, integral parts of Being. It is my contention that the inclusion of the real, per se, in Being is a valid seminal paradigm, because it then encompasses the whole of what-is, and therefore, should replace the post-Socratic paradigm, which still prevails, that equates Being with ideation, and anthropocentrically excludes the rest of the real, per se."

For those readers interested in contacting Koblenz about her work please write to: 3908 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD. 21218.

Kingsley K. Wu is an Associate Professor in the Department of Creative Arts at Purdue University. He writes: "How nice it is to hear about other people trying to go beyond mere decorative treatments. I have been interested in the connection between the architectural environment and human life experience; between the past and the present; and between cultural heritage and ethnic identity."

Last year Wu received a Fulbright grant to study northern Spain's *El Camino de Santiago*--the

Pilgrimage Road to Saint James. In the Middle Ages, Santiago was one of the three holiest Christian pilgrimage sites (along with Jerusalem and Rome). One result of his research is an illustrated lecture, which he presents to interested parties. Address: Creative Arts Department, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN. 47907.

Elizabeth Wilhite is a doctoral student in Education at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. Her dissertation focuses on "stress and burnout." Her interpretation will be grounded partly in interviews and observations in discussion groups that she will conduct. She would appreciate information on work dealing with the following themes: phenomenological research involving stress and burnout; and the relationship between phenomenology and self-discovery. Address: Rt. 1, Box 492, Pittsboro, N.C. 27312.

John Bright Mann is an independent film maker wrestling with the potential of the film documentary for phenomenological inquiry. He completed his dissertation, "A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Concept of Home," at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, in 1987.

Mann recently completed the documentary, *Shelter: Conversations with Homeless Men* (partially funded by the Kansas Humanities Committee and a NEA/AFI southwestern regional fellowship), which will be aired on several PBS stations this fall. The film presents conversations with six men living in a shelter for the homeless in Kansas City. Mann organizes the documentary around several basic existential themes used as episodes ("Belonging," "Plans and Dreams," "Work," "Memories," "The Condition," and "Getting Out").

Mann writes: "The intent behind *Shelter* is to allow these men's sense of home to emerge. The working assumption is that they are not 'homeless' but, instead, live in a remarkably complex world bearing little or no similarity with mainstream America. As one man says at the start of the film, 'I'm not homeless, I'm without shelter.' Or, as another man says, 'Home is anywhere I can be and

be comfortable, anywhere I can survive.'

"Through the film, I believe bits of different worlds emerge and we can begin to think about a central problem of 'homelessness'---our (mainstream America's) inability or refusal to go beyond the 'homeless' misnomer. These men are not homeless. As Mike says, they should be considered 'homeful'. If we begin to think of 'the homeless' as 'homeful' the current interventions become sadly irrelevant.

"I continue to think of editing as my form of phenomenological interpretation. I am especially interested in the notions of home and shelter. I am currently working on two new projects, *At Home in Greenville* and *Hidden Places*. The Greenville project will involve talks with similar people in six different Greenville's throughout the South to explore the notion of a Southern culture and consciousness. *Hidden Places* will involve discussion with children and adults about their hiding places---why they built or discovered them, how these places were a part of their lives. The greater goal of the project is to explore the need for hiding from and within the world. From what do we hide? Do children of different generations hide for different reasons? In talking with adults, I am especially interested in how memories of hiding places seem to call up very poignant moments for our lives. I would very much appreciate your readers contacting me if they have children with treehouses, caves, and the like; or if readers have memories of their own childhood hiding places." Address: 1311 Limit Avenue, Baltimore, MD. 21239.

David E. Denton is Director of Graduate Studies in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky. His books include *The Philosophy of Albert Camus*, *The Language of Ordinary Experience*, and the forthcoming *Gaia's Drum: Ancient Voices and Our Children's Future*. He writes: "In the early seventies, I taught a course in lived-space, drawing students from education, architecture, and design. The course was a terrific success until some new deans arrived and declared the topic 'too soft.' Faculty members from architecture used to take the course as well. Fun.

"My depression came, not from those deans, but from the isolation. Now *EAP* arrives. And some of my colleagues are beginning to ask the 'right' questions again! I'm really hoping that *EAP* thrives." Address: College of Education, Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation, 131 Taylor Education Building, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky 40506-0001.

CITATIONS RECEIVED

Frances Armstrong, 1990. *Dickens and the Concept of Home*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

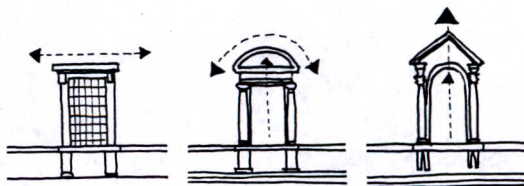
This professor of literature concludes that, in his novels and other writings, Charles Dickens "did celebrate the value of home, and increased that value by his assertion of it, but in the course of his writing he presented the home as myth, fiction and reality, and he was aware that if home is an answer, it is not a place where questioning ends."

Amos Rapoport, 1990. *History and Precedent in Environmental Design*. New York: Plenum.

A study of the built environment and historical precedent from an environment-behavior vantage point.

Donna W. Wilshire & Bruce Wilshire, 1989. "Gender Stereotypes and Spatial Archetypes," in *Anima*, vol. 15, pp. 77-86.

A discussion, written in dialogue, exploring the contrasting spatial expectations and values of men and women.



THOMAS THIIIS-EVENSEN'S *ARCHETYPES IN ARCHITECTURE*: THE WALL, INSIDENESS, AND OUTSIDENESS

As the first part of this review explained (*EAP*, spring 1990), Thomas Thiiis-Evensen's *Archetypes in Architecture* seeks to establish a universal language of architecture by focusing on the experienced qualities of floor, wall, and roof, which the Norwegian architect says are "the most basic elements in architecture" (p. 8). He explains that these three archetypes work existentially through the ways in which they physically and psychologically differentiate *inside* and *outside*.

The first part of this review considered Thiiis-Evensen's discussion of the ways in which the floor reconciles inside and outside. The second and last part of this review examines his discussion of the wall, which, he says, is generally more powerful than the floor or roof in reconciling inside and outside, since it is by way of the wall that one "passes through" between the inside and outside, either physically (through doors) or visually (through windows).

The wall resolves the existential tension between inside and outside in two ways: the wall draws exterior space inside, or the wall draws interior space outside. In turn, this degree of penetration from inside to outside or vice versa can vary: on one hand, there can be complete openness and invitation; on the other hand, there can be complete closure and rejection: "The wall's architecture...is a concrete realization of the existential struggle between an 'attacking' exterior and a 'secure' interior and thereby acquires expressive importance" (p. 116).

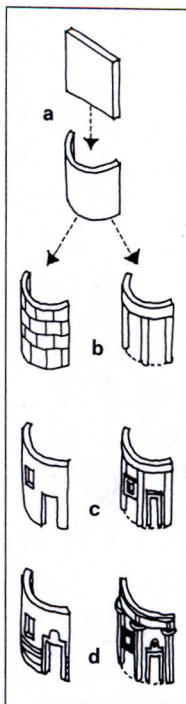
DEPTH AND THE WALL

In exploring the ways architecturally that the wall reconciles insideness and outsideness, Thiiis-Evensen makes a presentation that is considerably more complex than his explication of the floor, which he showed to reconcile insideness and outsideness largely through support and the accompanying spatial dialectic of above and below. In contrast, the wall is much more complicated in its inside-outside resolution because there are three spatial

dialectics to be accounted for: first, *depth*, relating to the spaces *in front of* and *behind* the wall; second, *height*, relating to the spaces *above* (roof) and *below* (ground and floor) the wall; and, third, *breadth*, relating to the spaces *to the right* and *to the left* of the wall.

To tackle the complexity of these three different spatial dialectics, Thiiis-Evensen examines each separately. Here, I discuss his presentation of depth, which he says is most important experientially because it is "directly concerned with the communication between inside and outside" (p. 117).

As illustrated in the figure to the right, Thiiis-Evensen argues that the depth qualities of a particular wall can be explored by considering four main themes of the wall--its *main form* (a), *building system* (b), *openings* (c), and *articulation* (d). The first theme--main form--identifies qualities such as flat or curving surfaces that reflect "the relative strength between inside and outside" (p. 140). Second, "building system" identifies whether the wall is solid, slab, skeletal, composite, and so forth. Third, "openings" focuses on doors and windows, and, last, "articulation" indicates the way the first three themes are interrelated (though, puzzlingly, Thiiis-Evensen does not discuss articulation as a section unto itself).



These four themes produce a conceptual order that is complicated and requires considerable attention and energy to master. To give a sense of the way in which Thiis-Evensen's discussion helps one become more sensitive to the wall as it expresses the inside-outside relationship, I illustrate his discussion of the window.

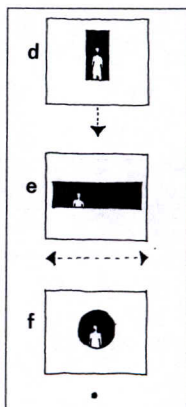
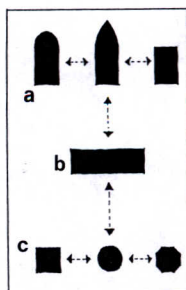
THE WINDOW

For the teacher who wishes to introduce students to Thiis-Evensen's approach but does not have time to cover all topics, the section on windows is useful because it describes clearly how the nature of one architectural element can affect the inside-outside experience. Thiis-Evensen claims that windows announce the mode of life within the building. They are "always an expression of the interior to the world at large":

While the door is determined by its relation to what is *outside*, the window is the symbol of what is *inside*. Just as the eye, it expresses the interior's outlook over exterior space... (p. 251).

In clarifying the ability of windows to influence the experienced quality of the interior, Thiis-Evensen identifies four parts of a window--the *opening*, the *face* in the opening, the *frame* around the opening, and the *bay*, or space in front of the opening. He then explores how each of these four components contribute to a sense of insideness and outsideness. Immediately, he points out that a window is much more than an opening in the wall: a window that is only a gaping hole makes the wall "a lifeless skin around a dead and empty interior" (p. 259). In this regard, the frame is important because it makes a setting for the inside space and brings it toward the viewer on the outside. If the window has no frame, the outside forces its way in. *The frame leads the inside out.*

Thiis-Evensen's discussion of the window is complicated, and I can only indicate a few ways here in which qualities of the window affect the sense of insideness or outsideness. One important element is the *form* of the window opening, of which there are three variations as shown in the



upper illustration, above left: vertical (a), horizontal (b), and central (c). The lower illustration indicates how these different forms lead to different inside-outside relationships, thus both the vertical (d) and central (f) windows suggests a movement coming from inside out, while the horizontal window (e) suggests an inside lateral movement that is separate from the observer outside.

Similarly, the frame leads to different expressions of the inside depending on which of its parts--the sill, lintel, or jambs--are emphasized. If all its parts are emphasized, as in g in the illustration, right, then the entire interior space reaches outward. On the other hand, if only the lintel is highlighted, then ceilings and an upward movement take precedence (h); or, if only the sill is highlighted, then floors and a sinking movement take precedence (i). In addition, several window frames can affect the movement of the wall as a whole, as is illustrated by the last drawing, far right, where j indicates the neutral effect of a window without frames; k, the rising effect of windows with their lintels emphasized; l, the sinking effect of windows with their sills emphasized; and m, the expanding effect of windows with complete frames.

COMMENTARY

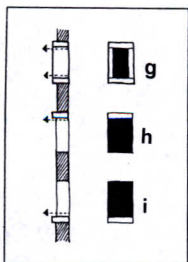
Thiis-Evensen's presentation of the wall is complex and takes much time and effort to master.

Some readers may feel that the many themes and subthemes fracture the fullness of architectural expression into a set of isolated categories. Thiis-Evensen emphasizes such thoroughness of presentation, however, because he believes that aesthetic understanding is too often subjective in the sense that architects have not thoughtfully considered how architectural forms translate themselves into experienced meaning grounded in inside and outside and supplemented by other natural dialectics like earth-sky, gravity-levity, up-down, left-right, darkness-light, and so forth.

The validity of Thiis-Evensen's phenomenology of architectural form involves at least two tests. First, as readers consider his discoveries, can they say, "Ah, yes, I know what he means. I've seen that, too, though I've never thought about it in that way"? This test might be called *intersubjective corroboration*--that is, do Thiis-Evensen's discoveries resonate with the architectural experiences of others? The second test involves interpretive power. Do Thiis-Evensen's explications help one to understand specific buildings and architectural styles in a way that conventional historical and cultural perspectives do not?

In both tests, I believe that Thiis-Evensen succeeds exceptionally well. Throughout my reading of this book, I have continuously experienced the pleasure of "aha!" experiences--of seeing some taken-for-granted architectural element or pattern in a new light. Case in point: Thiis-Evensen's innovative reading of the three classical orders, especially his explication of how the Corinthian order projects a sense of balance, uprightness, and pride.

At the same time, I find his outline an invaluable way to look at buildings. I have made a sketchbook that summarizes his various themes and motifs. I then draw a building, exploring its various parts in regard to Thiis-Evensen's themes. I realize, for



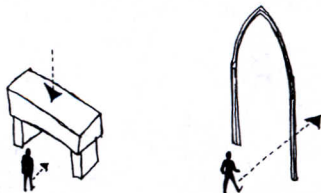
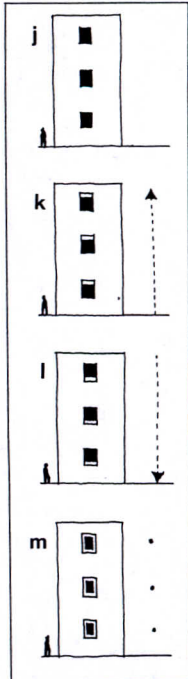
example, how highlighted lintels contribute to a building's sense of uplift, or how a niched entrance fosters a sense of intimacy.

Archetypes is a seminal work because, like all useful phenomenology, it helps us to see our usual world in new, unusual ways. Often, one may sense that a building evokes a particular quality--nobility, clumsiness, privacy, exhilaration, and so forth--but he or she cannot clarify the architectural reasons for the subjective feeling. Thiis-Evensen provides many clues and answers as to why a building speaks to us in the way that it does. His book provides an invaluable text to complement architectural history and to move environment-behavior students toward an intuitive but ordered mastery of buildings-as-experiences. If all environmental design students mastered Thiis-Evensen's interpretations, one senses that the built environment would become much more meaningful, alive, and beautiful.

D. Seamon

NOTE

¹Thomas Thiis-Evensen, *Archetypes in Architecture*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987. [First softcover edition, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, ISBN 0-19-520819-6, \$29.95.]



RECOLLECTIONS OF THE HOUSE ON CALIFORNIA ROAD: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

Anne Vittoria

Editors' note: The following reflections are the descriptive base for a phenomenology of home written by Anne Vittoria, a doctoral student in Sociology at the University of Kansas. Over a period of several weeks, Vittoria kept a journal of spontaneous recollections of a past home. Next, she reviewed the phenomenological literature on home and examined her own descriptions for underlying patterns that might clarify the nature of home and at-homeness.

Because of space limitations, we cannot publish the complete paper here. Instead, we present Vittoria's original reflections, which vividly substantiate Gaston Bachelard's suggestion that "Our home is our corner of the world...it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word."

In explicating her reflections phenomenologically, Vittoria identified three themes--incorporation, transition, and dialectics of space--that placed the descriptions in a wider frame of significance and that resonated with other phenomenological research on home. Incorporation refers to the way that the body, through the home, actively embraces and assimilates a world beyond itself, while transition speaks to the way the home provides a liaison between outside and inside, both physically and psychologically. Yet again, dialectics of space involves the larger set of tensions that the home helps to reconcile--for example, order and chaos, self and other, privacy and publicness, and so forth. Readers might set themselves to look for these three underlying themes as they move through Vittoria's reflections.

The home Vittoria describes is a 100-year-old white, Victorian farmhouse that sits on a knoll about 75 feet from California Road. The house commands ten-mile vistas of thriving Ohio farmland to the north and south.

I

The white picket fence, flowers in the spring, the yucca plant next to the fence and the iris that I brought back to life. What a new light on Sunday morning late, moving through the window creating a permanent, sparkling glow from ceiling to floor, gliding over the antique furniture in the dining room. I miss the ceilings, so tall, the rooms each in its own place and way, each containing its own world. Such a long view north down the road, California Road, over fields of corn, soybeans and winter wheat now. It is still growing?

How is my temple that overlooked the landscape? There, at that place, was a sense of permanency as well. That will never change. I could see so far down Dwyer Road and everyone always asked me where Dwyer Road was. My walks from the house to the creek, solitary and communing at the same time. White butterflies danced over a spring field and I really saw the house across Cincinnati-Brookville Road for the first time.

II

This is the time of year when the spring-summer ritual begins in the house and with the house. The back door is flung open and the spring world moves inside. I experience it in different ways. I enter the house from a side door through the mud porch, expecting the back door now to remain open. I catch the view through the porch to the green cornfields beyond. Enclosure within the house has become less important, though still present. I want the intermingling of the life of nature, the smell of spring, the sound of birds and cattle and cat meows to become a part of the world within the house.

I walk through the kitchen into the dining room knowing the open world outside is at my back now and that the return walk through the house will gratify all my senses as I cover the length of the rooms, eyes fixed through the screen door to the woods beyond. The extension through the rooms to the world outside is there, is real, just by the turning as though I own a different reality in each position.

III

Sara called and the cat returned to the house. No details. The back porch in spring and summer where there was always a breeze, even in the hottest weather. The roof, tin and slanted. The step-down from the house into the porch. White furniture, always painted white every spring, ready for summer. There's always a clear view to the White's red barn from the porch. The barn with the "X" across the door. Across the pond and up the hill, the images flow. Sitting on the bank behind the pond, the sky is so blue with a trace of a jet stream above the house. I see the "straight as an arrow road" in the distance, California Road headed directly north. Eddie says that you can always set your compass by California Road and you could find your way. But I didn't find my way, not there at least.

The woods in spring. I've seen the lace on the trees, spring after spring, looking so delicate. White fence and the gate to the mailbox. Only a few steps across the road to the box and I turn for a look at the house, to experience it once again from a distance. And there is the gravel driveway where I picked weeds one hot summer day until my hands were bloody. Day after day, painstakingly, I dug up the lawn. The poison that I had put on one section cleared it out so well and it looked manicured, ready for someone to see.

IV

The house on Edison Street, the house of childhood. The sidewalk to the street. The games with Larry. All together, happy then. The view to the north, so far, looking toward Oxford, across the fields, across wildflowers that grew in bunches over the septic tank. Tiny blue ones, arranged by nature. The yellow daisies in the field near the stream that emptied into the pond were always changing. I brought them in when I could and the arrangements transformed the rooms. The white vase with the tiny pink flowers. Lots of wildflowers that I just picked up and plunked into a vase. They always looked so right, such graceful volunteers.

The happiness of Genie and me on a hot summer morning in May of 1986. A late afternoon walk

around Dwyer Road. The "stealing" of pink primroses from the little white house by the road, just waiting for us. Genie arranged each vase artistically, with loving care, while I cooked the meal. Such a beautiful evening. Rich food, wine, flowers and close friendship. Laughing amidst the goings on. All color, smell, taste and touch and the house was the container. Cutting food on the kitchen table. The stools were places to perch. I listened to the sound of our movements in contrast and in unison. That house wrapped itself around us.

Walking back and forth from the kitchen to the dining room. Just an instant hesitation at the threshold and always the change in feeling at the step-down into the dining room. A whole world began to open up at that threshold. The texture, the height, the walls opened up and the light played powerfully on the furnishings, on my soul, when I stepped into the dining room. Emerging from and entering into, at the same instant. I can forever re-experience that step-down, step-into. It was so good, so perfectly enclosing and disclosing at the moment when I came increasingly into my world. The world of light and sound, beauty and tender things. The room resonates.

V

I'm thinking of the physical properties of the house. The original white boards, no siding, only the original materials. Color-white, whiter every year with the rains and snows cleansing the exterior. The heavy green shutters with the iron pins were always there. I tried using them one summer, opening them with much effort because of the accumulation of paint. Unfortunately, that very paint made the louvers unusable and no breeze, no light could penetrate into the house. I wanted to restore their function, if only for a brief period.

The openings into each room, a narrow entrance and transition, then the expanse to ten-foot ceilings. The small, steep stairs that I traveled, especially in the morning hours and late at night. They held me and made me feel as though I had earned the right to be up or down by my very traversing of them. The landing, so small and I am at the top where I make the turn, enclosed until I reach the threshold

of the front bedroom. Opening, full of light, air and the sounds of the summer crickets and birds of the nocturnal hours.

A summer morning and I move through the dining room to open the heavily carved door to the front porch where the fern stand holds a load of pink Impatiens. I set a cup of tea on the buffet. We never put a screen on that door, too much outside suddenly coming inside. So we left the glass in the "screen" door and opened the transom above. What fun to open a small, separate compartment above the door as a faint breeze came through. The paned windows throughout, whose only revelation of the history of the house was the existence of the wavy glass.

There was a low ceiling in the kitchen, a fake ceiling in the dining room and a high ceiling in the living room. The progression from intimate to open. I always felt that the dropped ceiling in the dining room was an imposition, the manifestation of a misunderstanding of the house. This misunderstanding loomed about in the original curtains covering the beautiful woodwork and the butchering of the fireplace.

VII

The back porch, the extension of the house east with the sloping tin roof. The step-down onto the porch. I walk to the big white porch rocker to write and read Peer Gynt and it is autumn, early. I leave the music on from the inner world of the house and can't decide if I want to hear it or the sounds of the outside. I sit facing autumn as it speaks through the solitary maple and the yellowing weeping willow, its back arched against the far fence along the road, California Road. I see Ken pull into the gravel road and he waves, stepping down from his truck to collect the mail from the beautifully carved handmade mailbox. He waves and I respond.

I look at the water pump and recall when we first came how Carl painted it for us. It stands as a symbol, no longer used. Carl uses the pump in front of the barn. How good it is to hear him pulling the lever, and at first nothing and suddenly, the gush of cold water, enough to wash dirty, working hands.

I can see into the house from where I am sitting on the porch and I remember friends following me into the house while I was preparing dinner. The squeaking of the back screen door and then the slam shut. The familiar cracking sound in the side door as I arrived home every day. I knew that I was at home by that familiar crack of the door, opening the way into the world of the house.

In a rush I think of the brown painted floors which showed all our footprints when I polished them slick and glossy. The north side of the house, a statement of its character and changing lines. The garage, the small door to the basement, the picket fence, the wire fence that separated my world from Carl and Eddie's space. The front porch with the paint that peeled, that place of rest in the rain and anticipation in the summer and late autumn when I watched the wheat being baled. The front porch that I painted over and over again where only trick or treaters tread. Everyone else came to the side entrance from the driveway. Side became front because we arrived in cars, not on horseback. The hitching post out front led one's eye directly into the front porch, a natural progression.

VII

Candles. Continuity. What did it mean on California Road? I have to find another place to put my soul. I thought I heard the cat again, softly purring, insistently meowing.

How I miss the master bedroom. Large, extending north, south and west, as though reaching for the woods and fields. I can look through the shutters and see the green of April. There was a self in that room. It truly comforted me. It surrounded me. I was that room. Light from the morning sun slanted across the bureau and landed in a square on the yellow rug. The bed faced west of course to imagine the expanse behind the woods-freedom. I watched the snow from the room, the changing seasons from all three corners. I shivered, even inside, with the aching cold of that winter of twenty-five below zero. All the windows were frozen. I could not see my vista, my outside world.

Peace, safety and yet a sense of timelessness there in that room. Straight, a view all around. When I

climbed the narrow steps for bed I knew there was a world of comfort there. At other times a world of delight. The room was filled with me and I with it, union.

Warm spring breezes and the sound of rain on the tin roof of the porch next to the bedroom window on the south side. Gushing, pitter-pat, misty and the massive thunderstorms, the wind in the woods across the road hitting the windows, rushing into the room. A world in that room. So much joy, grief, reflection. And always the breeze cutting a swatch through the room, north and south. I felt that here was a microcosm of the world, that the rhythm and work of nature surrounding the house and lived space within were complete in an ontological sense. It received me.

VIII

A tinkling noise while I was in the dining room here in Kansas today. For an instant I thought it was the musical bell at the north door of the house on California Road. A resurrection of feeling, transported back in time and place. Most people didn't use the bell, but knocked instead which was hard to hear from the interior of the house. I often wondered why they never used the bell. Should I have announced the bell's purpose, or stated why it was necessary to ring instead of knock?

Momentarily, I just knew that I was ready to turn for the door. "I'll be there, wait." I was on California Road. Another "transporting" moment came when I was in the den here and turned to catch the reflection of the Victorian chest and the orange wreath in the small windows next to the front door. I was there, not here. The depth of the reflection gave me a sense of the distance I always felt looking into the dining room on California Road.

California Road. How could a house sit so perfectly on a knoll as if having risen on the spot with its roots coming out of the soil? No one placed it there. It grew, lean and dignified. A house of character that spoke of its history. Originally, it was a log cabin and then each room was added separately. And why was the reading room so special? Lovely carved woodwork and the

fireplace with a separate entrance. How many have sat there, experienced the "there" and remained in its midst? Now, another sits there and rests in its high ceilings and lean dimensions, so comforting and protective, yet always tied to the woods across the street, for it would not have been so rich had I not been able to see that the green, growing area surrounds.

Why did I always turn at the corner passing the front door and then make a u-turn into the reading room? I like the going out and coming back, I suppose. Turning a corner over and over again. Why did I move in such a way, bypassing the first door? A newness in each turn maybe.

IX

Again today I thought I heard the cat on the stairs. No, I'm not on California Road. I do dearly miss the vistas. I feel contained here at this time. Long, beautiful vistas. Every window in that house captured a different fragment of nature, some capsuled and detailed, as though the window acted as a true frame for a small grouping and contained it.

I'm thinking of the view from the reading room across the road--gravel, grass, fence, vines, road and the growth on the floor of the woods. Tall trees, many leaves. My eyes move upward and from my seat in the wing back chair I rise up as my eyes travel the distance from base to sky. The wavy glass in the paned windows of an old house give it a wonderful unreality, an unfixed quality.

Candles, how the house could glow. Each room a different mood. The mood of that house. A big issue, complicated. I knew its possibilities the first day Ted and I walked into the living room with the flowered curtains hanging over such beautiful woodwork. One of a kind. "Take those curtains down," I shouted, "let the woodwork be." And I let it be unto its own for over six years. No curtains, just shutters.

I'm thinking of the rhythm of moving through that house right now. There is indeed a rhythm here. In the house on California Road one of the things I think I liked the most was the almost unconscious "starting out and ending up" in various

parts of that house. That's the point, you have to feel that you can move with the house. An odyssey almost every day because of the length of the house and the exceptionally different mood in all of the nooks and crannies. I walk through in the winter and set my tea on the buffet. The snow drops off the roof of the side porch and I feel the warmth of the furnace and hear its rhythmical hum beneath the floor.

X

I keep thinking that I have to save the chicken remains to give to the cat. I face west across the road. The open grass in front of the woods on California Road announces the dense growth of poplars and oak. The clearing beyond and the tunnel through the woods to the west side. I turn and look at the house. I walk toward it.

XI

Images. The barnyard with the vine climbing up the middle of the massive barn door. Red and brown vines during the fall lending a perfect outline to the entry doors of the barn. The yellow milk house tucked into the corner of the barn makes me think of a child attached to the place. The fences were white because Carl and Eddie knew how to keep them white. I remember mowing "their part" of the barnyard and looking back at the house, taking the distance and perspective into myself, yet knowing I could return. A feeling of possession. The north side of the house was always striking. Long, lean and dainty. A real house that spread its body horizontally. The wicker furniture and the fern on the porch.

As I sit upon the riding mower and move around the house, I look northward, making the mower turn from west to north. I remember the incredible change of feeling when the turn came, moving parallel to the picket fence, moving slowly around the house, feeling every breeze.

XII

To the south was the barn, the yellow milk house, the elevated ramp into the barn, the "no-count" woods (Eddie's description), the wire fence and the

wooden posts and the side of the barn with the wide expanse.

The sunsets! In winter, through the living room windows I could see deep pink tones. The rural mailbox. Getting mail was a ritual, an event to cross the road and return to the house. Looking back at the house from across the road, it seemed to be a perfect "T."

XIII

I'm looking north now, following the line of California Road, which the folks around here say you can set a compass by, so true in its north-south stretch, long and undulating, beside wild flowers, winter wheat, soybeans and corn. I remember the path of the deer from the woods across California Road, sometimes at dusk. Once I saw eight at a time, emerging from the back woods along the field by the house, crossing the road headed west. I was startled by their beauty and their number. They knew where they were going. The water tower on the way to Oxford that I can see from the upstairs windows. The Isler farm with cattle that looked as though they were hanging on the side of a hill.

On Route 128 returning from Oxford I would always look to see if I could find the house, the familiar roof line, the green roof of the house, the red barn, the cluster of habitation. Coming home. Now the turn into the driveway. It always felt different depending on whether I was coming from Oxford headed south or coming from Cincinnati headed north. The moment of entry and the angle of the house carried its own distinctiveness, or maybe, it was what I carried with me internally from each of those different locations. That moment of transition from the road into the protected world of fence, grass and house.

I see it all, indelible, the house on California Road. I bore it, gave it life and it will always contain Anne. I took possession of that house. The concrete floor of the mud porch, painted and repainted. Ferns and white wicker and the maple in autumn. Open the door, it's all there in monumental color. The yellow of the maple glows through the kitchen window. Color given and received.

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