DWELLING, LANDSCAPE, PLACE AND MAKING

Jørn Utzon Anthology

Lars Botin, Adrian Carter and Roger Tyrrell
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INTRODUCTION

Background and acknowledgments

This anthology is based on the Proceedings of the Third International Utzon Symposium held on 1st April 2012 in the Dar el Bacha palace, Marrakech, Morocco. The Symposium was a further development of the previous two Symposia held by the Utzon Research Center in Aalborg, Denmark and represents a collaboration between the Jørn Utzon Research Network (JURN), The Utzon Research Center and L’ Ecole Nationale d’Architecture (ENA) of Morocco.

Morocco was chosen as the location for the event in recognition of the significant influence it had upon Utzon’s canon after his visit in 1949. He hiked through the Atlas Mountains drawing inspiration from the anonymous yet poetic hill villages still evident today. The impact of this experience was to resonate consistently in his work.

The objective of the Symposium was to expose and discuss the paradigmatic framework that underpinned Utzon’s design methodology using the thematic frames of Dwelling, Landscape, Place and Making as foci for this discourse. Each contribution has been positioned within these frames that form distinct yet inter-related chapters with this text.

The event was attended by some seventy academics, students and practitioners from such diverse locations as South Africa, Tasmania and mainland Australia, France, Finland, Denmark, the UK and Morocco.

The Symposium was led by Juhani Pallasmaa, Richard Leplastrier and Jan Utzon, Jørn Utzon’s son and collaborator. Additional contributors from Australia, Denmark and the United Kingdom developed the discussions through presentation of formal academic papers. These papers were published in occasion of the symposium,
and the current anthology is a furthering and elaboration of the original papers.

The presentations of Richard Leplastrier and Jan Utzon have been transcribed from audio recordings made at the Symposium. These verbatim recordings edited in collaboration with the respective authors. All texts have been peer reviewed and then edited by members of the JURN Steering Group and by Aalborg University Press reviewers.

The Symposium Proceedings have thus been collected within this volume with the ambition of providing the reader with a coherent perspective of Utzon’s unique and humane approach to architecture and his wider contribution to contemporary academic debate.

Contents
The volume is divided into three parts, where the 1st part ‘Foundation’ presents and discuss the background and content of the Utzon paradigm. Tyrrell and Carter (chapter 1) are concerned with the cornerstones of architecture, being: techné, arche and the poetic synthesis as constituent for the paradigm. They find that Utzon masters to bridge the technical and artistic, hence creating a synthesis, or hybrid, which they mean is of great inspiration for contemporary and future architecture – hence the paradigm. Carter (chapter 2) moves on in addressing the hermenutical, historical and cultural heritage in the work of Utzon. We are told that the essence in the work of Utzon is an artistic vein of high sensitivity coined with an in-depth knowledge of the quality and capacity of materials (techtonics). Roberts (chapter 3) brings us to the island of Mallorca where Utzon designed two houses for his family. One of those are Can Lis and Roberts theoretically enframes the villa in the British geographer Jay Appleton’s concepts on landscapes: prospect-refuge. Appleton’s concepts are used to explain and discuss how the villa relates to the surrounding landscape in both a literal and symbolic way, where it in many ways reflects how humans always have
considered the quality and capacity of the landscape before settling for shorter or longer periods. In the last chapter of Part 1 Taylor and Hinds takes us to the windy coasts of Tasmania (chapter 4). Taylor and Hinds are practicing architects and they discuss the practice of architecture in relation to being-out-there, i.e. Architecture and Camping. They argue that architecture is, or should be, in close relationship with the actual nature in which it is embedded. This can be made by doing the enquiries, analyses and studies in nature. The study of the architect should, as we design in the landscape/nature, be placed in the actual context and the drawings/models reflect the weight of the context. Taylor and Hinds tells us that this focus on the relationship between humans and nature mediated through architecture and architectural practice is deeply inspired by the practices of Jørn Utzon.

Part 2 of the volume titled ‘Legacy’ is transcriptions of presentations made at the symposium by Jan Utzon and Rick Leplastrier. Utzon and Leplastrier takes us down memory lane, introducing the importance of family and friendship, but first of all kinship. Jan Utzon (chapter 5) besides discussing how he participated in a number of projects by his father, also introduces to own projects where he elaborates on themes that were crucial to Jørn Utzon: people and context, might that be geographical, social, economical or and/cultural. Jan Utzon takes us around the world visiting projects in Africa, Australia, Mexico and Denmark, which shows us that the general and universal qualities in the work of Jørn Utzon has been carried on by his son. The Australian architect Rick Leplastrier (chapter 6) has been teaching and holding Master classes for decades and the enthusiasm and engagement of the experienced architect is clearly reflected in the presentation. Leplastrier talks about the importance of physical movement: travelling, sailing, biking etc. in order to get an in-depth cultural understanding. All of this in order to build. The highly personal account of Leplastrier of his friendship with Jørn Utzon and how this inspired him in his own work tells us about the intimacy we should have with our co-travellers, independent if this is a human or a thing (boat, motorbike or whatever). The translation of the experiences made through our
movements and observations could lead to ‘beautiful ideas’, which according to Leplastrier was an expression that often escaped Utzon as he commented on collaborators drawings and models.

Part 3 of the volume titled ‘Reflections’ is characterized by philosophical and theoretical reflections on the concepts of landscape, dwelling, place and making. None of the chapters are specifically concerned with the work of Utzon, but nevertheless written in the spirit of Utzon. The Finnish architect and philosopher of architecture Juhani Pallasmaa (chapter 7) focus critically on contemporary placelessness and hyper-mobility in a world of globalization. We are creatures of territoriality and place, as any other biological creature. How are we to deal with that in a reality that is becoming increasingly rootless and nomadic? And how can architecture as mediating technology address this problem? One possible way out is, according to Pallasmaa, to re-introduce the notion of home by ‘re-enchantment, re-mythification and re-eroticization’.

Botin (chapter 8) addresses the notions of landscape and dwelling from an overly phenomenological stance, where the writings and thoughts of Martin Heidegger are central. Botin looks into the etymology and meaning of the concepts in a historical and cultural perspective. He is overly concerned with the intrinsic relationship in between landscape and dwelling, mediated by the human body in all its complexity. What remains crucial as we deal with this complexity is that we do it in order to concern, nurture, care and sustain.

The final chapter (chapter 9) by Tyrrell is an intense and personal enquiry on the ‘Nature of Dwelling’ through the eyes of a child. The child, Anthony, constructs and builds by means of what is at hand and is deeply involved in the process of building and to a lesser degree on the actual product of his endeavors, hence the ‘generative verb’ in relation to the ‘degenerate noun’. Tyrrell finds in the practice of Anthony exemplified the ideas of Heidegger, Pallasmaa and Zumthor.

The intent of this book is to add further knowledge on the architecture
and work of Jørn Utzon, and to initiate research and enquiry on what we have coined as the 'Utzon Paradigm'. We are convinced that the work and practices of Utzon in relation to landscape, dwelling, place and making are of exemplary, iconic and general character, which means that the contours of a paradigm is there to be found. Our future work within JURN will focus upon elaborating these contours and fill the form with contents. We hope that many will join us in this effort that will be continued in future Utzon symposiums and workshops around the world.

Lars Botin, Adrian Carter and Roger Tyrrell
“Comparable in subtle ways to the protean achievements of Le Corbusier, Utzon’s architecture emerges today as paradigmatic at many levels not least of which is the manner in which, from the beginning of his career, he would challenge the assumed superiority of Eurocentric culture.”

Frampton 2003
THE UTZON PARADIGM

chapter 01

Roger Tyrrell and Adrian Carter
RE-CONSIDERING UTZON

“Comparable in subtle ways to the protean achievements of Le Corbusier, Utzon’s architecture emerges today as paradigmatic at many levels not least of which is the manner in which, from the beginning of his career, he would challenge the assumed superiority of Eurocentric culture.”
(Frampton 2003, p. 6)

This Paper strives to address three objectives. The first is to discuss the Utzon’s oeuvre from a paradigmatic perspective, the second to layer that paradigm within two distinct but interconnected frameworks. The third objective is to explore the fusion of this dichotomous paradigm through the concept of ‘poetic conjunction’.

Jørn Utzon (1918-2008) is now internationally recognised as one of the most original, innovative and socially concerned of modern architects, perhaps the last great exponent of the humanistic Nordic tradition within modern architecture. He is the architect of what is still widely considered the most noble and humane housing built in Denmark, a simple, yet poetic modern church at Bagsværd and the most iconic and popular building of the 20th Century, his great unfinished masterpiece, the Sydney Opera House (see p. 24-25).

The Opera House has become the symbol of not just Sydney, but also Australia; that owes it origins to the maritime environment of Aalborg, where Jørn Utzon spent his youth, and the inspiration of his father Aage Utzon, an esteemed yacht designer. As the citation of the Jury for the 2003 Pritzker Architecture Prize to Jørn Utzon states:

“He rightly joins the handful of Modernists who have shaped the past century with buildings of timeless and enduring quality”
(Anonymous 2003)

Jørn Utzon was born in Copenhagen and moved with his family to
Aalborg when just a few months old. His father, Aage Utzon, who trained as a Naval Architect in Newcastle in the north of England, was the Chief Engineer at the Aalborg shipyard. This formative context together with his father’s international reputation as a yacht designer provided an early tectonic influence upon Utzon. The Utzon family, loved the nature that surrounded them, and Aage Utzon revealed the structure of natural phenomena to his son, developing a sensitivity that would provide design inspiration throughout his life. At the age of nineteen, Utzon attended Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen to study architecture, actively seeking out Professors Kay Fisker and Steen Eiler Rasmussen as his tutors. The former, reinforcing the concept of tectonic integrity, the latter, providing a formative phenomenological influence.

After graduation in 1942, Utzon went to work in neutral Sweden and following the end of the Second World War travelled extensively within the rest of Scandinavia, Europe, Morocco, the United States, and Mexico. His travels provided significant inspiration that would be later manifested in a range of projects that exhibited sophisticated trans-cultural influences. He set up a practice office in Copenhagen 1950, completing a range of largely domestic, small-scale projects, including most influentially his own house and the Kingo housing development near Helsingør. His most significant commission, the Sydney Opera House was won through an open international competition in 1957.

The eventual politicised debacle of the Sydney Opera House is well known. Utzon withdrew from the Project in 1966. However, whilst working on the Sydney Opera House, but prior to moving to Australia in 1963 he designed such seminal works as the Melli Bank, Iran (1959-60) and the Fredensborg Houses (1959-63). Whilst living in Sydney, he produced the first design proposal for the remarkable underground Silkeborg Museum of Art (1963 – un-realised), a first-prize winning proposal for the Zürich Theatre competition (1964), a proposal for the Madrid Opera House Competition (1962– un-realised), and a proposal for his own house at Bayview, north of Sydney (1964-65 unrealised). After leaving Australia in 1966, Utzon
lived variously in Denmark, Hawaii and subsequently, for much of the rest of his life on Mallorca. During this later stage of his life and without an established office, Utzon continued to produce a range of distinguished projects, including the Bagsværd Church (1968-76), the Kuwait National Assembly (1972—82) and his own houses Can Lis (1971-72) and Can Feliz 1991-95) that employed the technique of ‘additive architecture’, drawing both from his knowledge of natural forms, and the tectonic resolution he had developed through the realisation of the Sydney Opera House. In 1999 Utzon accepted an invitation to provide design proposals and guidelines for the renewal and refurbishment of the Sydney Opera House, which he continued to be involved in until his death in 2008. He was also responsible, together with his architect son Kim Utzon for the design of the Utzon Center in his hometown of Aalborg, which was opened to the public to celebrate his ninetieth birthday earlier in the same year.

It is however, his Bagsværd Church the two family villas on Mallorca, particularly Can Lis that together with the Sydney Opera House, represent some of the most poetic essays in phenomenological and tectonic engagement with place.

His last commission was to design and oversee the production of a white grand piano for Bagsvaerd Church. A fitting finale for an architect who transcended scales, transgressed cultural boundaries and transformed modern architecture yet throughout, remained a private and modest man.

“My spaces are born not of intellectual operations, but of the emotions rooted in the desires of many different people….my spaces transcend theory and appeal to the deepest spiritual levels. In other words, my spaces relate to the fundamental aspects of humanity.”

(Heneghan cites Ando 1996, p. 17)

In the same way that Ando eschewed an overly theoretical approach to architecture, we find parallels in Utzon’s approach. Utzon’s method was not predicated upon or populated by a-priori theoretical positions. He was inhabited not by intellectual ruminations and
postulations, but by interrogations of the core nature of human existence. This is problematic for those who provide critique on the nature of architecture as much contemporary criticism seeks to identify the act of architecture within a singular theoretical position, and by implication, conveniently explain the intent of the author. These relationships form the platform for much contemporary judgement and critique. If Utzon provides a paucity of theoretical frameworks, how can the critic, critique?

Utzon provides a paradigm. A model, not predicated upon a particular theoretic stance, but rather predicated upon influences, reflections and intuitive acts. It is that paradigm that this Paper examines. The idea of paradigmatic study in architecture is not new

OF PARADIGM

“Paradigm, par’a dim, n. an example, exemplar.”
(McDonald 1982, p. 959)

The dictionary definition is helpful in that it provides the platform for paradigmatic study in architecture: an exemplar. This platform was adopted by Bernard Hoesli¹ in January 1957 in a teaching programme that sought to:

1. “Familiarise the student with what can be considered the classics of modern architecture.
2. To enlarge the student’s repertoire of space concepts and to acquaint him with the possibilities of handling space.
3. To practice the reading of plans and sections.
4. To further his understanding of structure by simplifying the models to a presentation of load-bearing and non-loadbearing elements.

¹ A member of the so called ‘Texas Rangers’ Group that included Colin Rowe, John Hejduk and Robert Slutzky; A group of academics at the University of Architecture in Austin, Texas, USA, between 1951 and 1957. They challenged the accepted orthodoxies of pedagogic methodology and sought to develop a pedagogic model supported by theoretical intellectual constructs.
5. To demonstrate the relationship between structural concept and space concept.”

(Caragonne 1995, p. 268)

It is clear that Hoesli sought analysis of an extant ‘classic work of modernism’ to inform student’s architectural vocabulary. However this analysis was to be later conjoined with synthesis of a design proposition ‘in the manner of…..’. The vehicle was developed over time principally in the United States.

Alan Balfour introduced the idea of analysis of the ideas and strategies of architects to the Portsmouth School of Architecture in 1967. Supported by the then Head of School, Professor Geoffrey Broadbent, Barry Russell and Peter Jenkins developed and variously reinterpreted Balfour’s premise and in 1975 Ruslan Khalid, (a former student at the AA under Peter Cook), brought the ‘Design in the Style of’ to Portsmouth School of Architecture. The heritage of this project lay with Phillipe Boudon from the Nantes School of Architecture who in 1970 had developed ‘Le Project a la Maniere de’ (Project in the Manner of) which provided students with a plural opportunity of analysis and synthesis ‘a la maniere de’.

Barry Russell reports that Thomas Llorens was responsible in 1975 for its most precisely defined incarnation.

“It was clearly redefined and sharpened by Tomas Llorens (the Spanish philosopher and critic), when he taught with us, into the Paradigm Project, and with this title it has survived many transformations under different hands…..”.

(Russell 1995, p. 34)

The project has, since adoption at Portsmouth, run consistently to this day; the content and nuance of interpretation being dependent upon particular authors, a diverse range including Thomas Llorens, Chris Abel, Nigel Mills, Dick Bunt, David Parham and Barry Russell. Given Utzon’s reticence to articulate a singular theoretical position, it is appropriate to use the methodology of paradigm to examine
and explain his work. The idea of paradigm, as indeed Utzon’s work, transcends, but may also encapsulate theory, in analysing influences, methods and synthesis. In response to this paradigmatic analysis, this Paper seeks to make clear descriptions of the elements of the Utzonian paradigm.

Initial analysis suggests that Utzon’s oeuvre may be described as two distinct, but interconnected frameworks of consideration; *Arche* and *Techne*; both terms drawn from Ancient Greek and which of course provide the etymological root of the word *Architect*.

**OF ARCHE**

*Arche*, is concerned with that which sits in front of the idea of, in this case, the idea of architecture. The term acknowledges that there is something at the very core of human existence that informs the idea of architecture and specifically Utzon’s architecture. *Arche* encapsulates core phenomena such as ‘being’, ‘dwelling’ and ‘room’. Such intuitive engagement is encapsulated within the Nordic psyche and clearly underpins Utzon’s canon of work. The realm described by the term *Arche* has been the subject of consistent interrogation within Nordic Architecture, striving to reveal core conditions of human existence apropos the idea of architectural endeavour (see p. 31).

Alvar Aalto, Sverre Fehn and Juhani Pallasmaa represent exemplars of those who sought or seek the core, the essence of architecture routing back towards primal sources of what it is ‘to be’, ‘to dwell’ and of course by implication, to make place.

This however is not a realm of ‘crudeness’ or primitive response (in the way in which that word is used pejoratively within contemporary language), but rather perhaps comparable with the finest culinary ‘jus’, a concoction where everything which is unnecessary has been evaporated; a distillation of the essence. Study of Utzon’s canon, including his albeit limited writings, reveals an innate sense of *Arche* both in the genesis and subsequent development of the idea.
that is revealed within the artefact itself.

However, to be able to investigate further, Utzon’s intuitive engagement with *Arche* requires further classification in order to concretise what would otherwise remain as an abstract concept. The Authors have sought to define components of Utzon’s realm of *Arche* and offer the following elements for discussion: Nature, Landscape and Place, The Primitive, Transcultural Influence, Ethics Humanity and Community. It is our contention that these conceptual fields sit ahead of Utzon’s ideas that subsequently evolved as architectural propositions.

It is clear that Utzon was influenced early in life by nature; both the forms of nature as he appreciated in the photographs of Karl Blossfeldt and D’Arcy Thompson’s seminal publication *On Growth and Form*, but also by the more subtle understanding of the relationships between nature’s elements such as geology, topography and climate and the inter-connectedness of these natural phenomena. Such awareness extended to understanding and awareness of the relationship between landscape and place perhaps exemplified by the manner in which the fishermen’s cottages and farmsteads of Northern Jutland hunker down in the landscape lying within soft dips of the undulating territory in such a way that the floor plane becomes invisible. This understanding also gave rise to the antithesis of this condition: the Platform. When Utzon mounted the Mayan temple ruins of Chichen Itza and Monte Albán in Mexico he understood the significance of rising above the landscape indeed, creating landscape that simultaneously provides distinction, authority and a clearer connection to the deities.

“The Platform as an architectural element is a fascinating feature. I first fell in love with Mexico on a study trip in 1949 where I found many variations, both in size and idea of the platform, and where many of the platforms are alone without anything but the surrounding nature.”

(Utzon 2006, p. 143)

We also contend, that central to Utzon’s realm of *Arche* was a deep appreciation of ‘the primitive’. Again we use the word in a
non-pejorative sense that refers to a primal condition rather than a condition exhibiting a paucity of sophistication. Consistently Utzon’s canon demonstrates a desire to remove, to strip away in the pursuit of something that represents a built solution responding to the core conditions of human existence.

“The simple, primitive life in the country, trips to the mountains with skis or guns, sailing trips, a few weeks together with the Arabs in the mountains and deserts, a trip to North America and Mexico, the life of the Indians – all this has formed the basis for the way of life my wife and I have wanted to lead, and thus for the design of the house.”

(Utzon 2006, p. 78)

Implicit within such consideration is a sense of humility, ethics and community. It was clearly not just the form of the Moroccan hill villages of the Southern Atlas Mountains that Utzon drew inspiration from, but also less tangible understandings emerged, such as identity within a clustered morphology, the value that communing and the antithesis, retreat and privacy, held for the response to human experience through built form. At his core, it is also clear that Utzon’s approach to life and his work was underpinned by a clear sense of ethics that he maintained despite considerable pressures to the contrary. In his forced self-removal from the Sydney Opera House project, he performed an act of considerable courage. Mogens Prip-Buus’s book ‘Letters from Sydney’, charts events as they unfolded during that period with real textual clarity. What remains with the reader is a sense of political intrigue, economy of truth and huge injustice. Lesser men might have compromised, given the potential consequences of leaving a project of such significant profile. Utzon remained clear as to his decision.
OF TECHNE

The concept of *Techne* focuses upon the ‘bringing forth’ or revealing of the idea, which in turn was, at its origin of course, informed by *Arche*. Such a discourse at a fundamental level involves making the idea ‘material’. In the context of Utzon, it also encompasses his engagement with the structure and form of nature, a material we will call ‘light’ in both the tangible and metaphysical senses as well as his design processes such as prototyping (see p. 34-35).

In his Paper ‘Techne, Technites, Tekton, Tectonic: Thoughts on Heidegger’s Thinking on Thinking in Architecture’ (unpublished), Dr. Richard Bunt, develops clear relationships between the Etymological distinctions of the words that surround contemporary academic discourse on tectonic architecture, and Heidegger’s thoughts upon acts of revealing.

“For Heidegger, the technites was the one who possessed the understanding necessary to grasp with his mind considerations that were fundamental and in a sense concealed, in respect of that which was yet to be made. The skill of the technites was to be able to understand and bring together as yet hidden, invisible and intangible properties in order to be able to draw out and bring forth these aspects and reveal them in the object which resulted from the operation of making.”

(Bunt, p. 3)

The relationship between the source of the words and Heidegger’s thought provides a clear theoretical platform to discuss Utzon’s attitude to revealing, bringing forth and making.

The Authors have developed a framework for the discussion of *Techne* within Utzon’s paradigm that might be encapsulated within these terms; Nature and Form, Making, Form and Structure, Material and Light, Geometry, Additive Architecture and Prototyping. Again, these classifications are not intended as finite, but rather to provoke or initiate discussion.

What is self-evident from Utzon’s canon and written commentary
was the influence that nature’s form had upon his work both at the level of Arche as previously discussed within this paper, but also within the realm of revealing, bringing-forth and of course making. We can appreciate Utzon’s connection with nature at the level of Arche in this remark:

“The human regulation or adaption of the site has resulted in something even stronger than nature and has given it a spiritual content.”

(Utzon 2006, p. 146)

And the relationship with Techne in the following statement:

“The sparrow hawk and nature can teach us that when a form or construction is unable to solve all problems or functions – it is supplemented with a new modified system that harmonises with the first.”

(Schultz 2009, p. 5)

It is this oscillation between the two paradigmatic elements that will later in this Paper be argued as the foundation of the ‘poetic synthesis’ of Utzon’s paradigm.

Making, Form and Structure inhabit Utzon’s work and every level of consideration. From the intuitive reinterpretation of naturally occurring forms and structure through to the pragmatic realisation and delivery of design, Utzon was clearly driven by the process of architecture. This engagement was to develop incrementally towards concepts such as additive architecture, industrialised construction process themselves developed through the vehicle of prototyping.

“If an Architect is to work independently with his tools, he must experiment, practice like a musician with his scales, practice with masses, rhythms created by clustering masses, combinations of colours, light and shadows etc.”

(Utzon 2006, p. 23)
The articulate tectonic resolution that Utzon sought was further informed by consistent engagement with materiality. Indeed, material and its illuminator, light sits at the very core of Utzon’s oeuvre. For Utzon, as for Louis Kahn, light itself was a material.

“If we understand the nature of material, we have its potential close at hand and far more tangibly than if we base ourselves on mathematical formula and art forms.”
(Utzon 2006, p. 24)

Utzon’s engagement with material did not simply reside at a metaphysical or transcendental level. He was clearly consumed to ‘know’ material in terms of material structure, density, durability, innate properties and of course, potential in application.

“…..we have to be able to understand the structure of wood, the weight and hardness of stone, the character of glass; we must become one with our materials and be able to fashion and use them in accordance with their constitution.”
(Weston cites Utzon 2002, p. 11)

Much of this knowing or material wisdom was of course informed by Utzon’s formative experiences in the shipyards of Aalborg, or in the discovery of the phenomena of natural forms. However, such experiences were re-interpreted consistently.

In geometry, Utzon found tectonic solutions. However, Utzon’s engagement with geometry was not abstract, but entirely rational and pragmatic. For Utzon, geometry represented a route to the resolution of complex form rather than a theoretical construct in itself. Nowhere is this approach more evident than in the design of the load-bearing roof structure and tile lids of the Sydney Opera House. Clearly for Utzon it was the application of complex geometry that provided the key to the forms developed, founded upon an appreciation of the value of testing, both through drawing and prototyping. Fused with the concept of geometry, prototyping and
industrial production was a realm that he inhabited described as Additive Architecture. Mogen Prip-Buss recalls the moment when Utzon described the term ‘Additive Architecture’.

“I happened to say something that Jørn asked me to repeat. He then got up and with his 6B pencil wrote the words ADDITIVE ARCHITECTURE on the wall, and said we had broken through the sound barrier.”

(Prip-Buus 2009, p. 8)

This additive principle provided huge freedom to experiment with a limited range of components, and from such experimentations were born projects such as the Jeddah Stadium (1967), the Farum Town Centre (1966), the Espansiva construction system (1969) and the Kuwait National Assembly (1972-82).

Implicit within the additive principle is the development of processes of repetitive mass production and implicit within such industrialised processes is the concept of prototyping that facilitates the incremental design resolution of components in three dimensions. Prototyping resolves design issues prior to production and enables aesthetic judgements to be made founded upon a three-dimensional evaluation.

This shift from a fragmented to a cohesive building delivery process was both revolutionary and problematic. It is clear certainly with the Sydney Opera House Project that the conservative nature of the construction industry and the client body were unable or unwilling to accept the clear logic of such a paradigm shift. As Alexander Kouzmin wrote:

“Utzon’s radical revision of traditional roles and responsibilities, and his linking of design and construction functions as an organic and indivisible process entailing the closest collaboration between architect, consultants and contractors, proved to be irreconcilable with the administrative strategies of functional and divided responsibility.”

(Kouzmin 2009, p. 8)
OF THE POETIC SYNTHESIS

Contemporary science, informs us simultaneously, of the wisdom and danger of reductionist ambitions. In the foregoing text Utzon’s paradigm has been deconstructed; initially into two conjoined yet distinct elements Archε and Technε, each element being further reduced to its component parts. However, if we isolate the quark from human spirit or indeed the reverse, we are in danger of losing sight of the whole entity that we know as human existence.

Already we have suggested that the defined elements themselves are inter-related and argued that Utzon consistently oscillated between scales of consideration. This Paper will now argue that these elements were bound together by what we term ‘The Poetic Synthesis’.

Underpinning Utzon’s work is a poetic, metaphysical dimension that simultaneously transcends the dichotomy of this paradigmatic investigation yet paradoxically fuses the elements together. To look up in Bagsvaerd Kirke as the soft light moves fluidly across the sculpted ceiling is to commune with the deities. To walk down the internal stairways of the Opera House is to be alongside the mountain streams of Utzon’s Nordic world. To sit in in Utzon’s living room in Can Lis looking out through the apparently frameless, deep sandstone window bays to the sea and sky beyond is to return to the cave and a core sense of human existence.

Such poetic qualities consistently resonate in the Nordic world. In Art, Music, Literature, Poetry and Film, we find a melancholic and reflective attachment to the metaphysical realm and it should be no surprise that Utzon too inhabited this realm (see p. 40).

It is the conjoining of Archε and Technε through this poetic synthesis that makes Utzon’s contribution to architecture unique and, as Frampton suggests, makes his work worthy of examination across all of its dimensions.

Contemporary architecture, so often dominated by surface and image, will perhaps once again be encouraged to return to substance. The simple hypothesis is that substance is not an external force but rather, as Utzon showed, a force that resides deep within each of us.
REFERENCES


Caragonne., A. 1995, _The Texas Rangers – Notes from an Architectural Underground_, MIT Press, Massachusetts, USA.


Image Credits

P. 24-25: The Sydney Opera House by J. Utzon, Australia - Tyrrell, R.

P. 31: The Hut from which to view Reindeer by Snøhetta Architects, Norway - Tyrrell, R.

P. 34-35: Norwegian Landscape - Tyrrell, R.

P. 40: Bagsvaerd Church, Utzon, J., Denmark - Tyrrell, R.
INFLUENCE AND REINTERPRETATION
chapter 02

A paradigm for sustainable contemporary transcultural and regional architecture

Adrian Carter
The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional cultures, which might not be an irreparable wrong, but also of what I shall call for the time being the creative nucleus of great civilizations and great culture, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life, what I shall call in advance the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind. The conflict springs up from there. We have the feeling that this single world civilization at the same time exerts a sort of attrition or wearing away at the expense of the cultural resources, which have made the great civilizations of the past.

(Ricoeur 1961)

Already in 1967 Jørn Utzon was recognised by Sigfried Giedion, in the fifth edition of his book *Space, Time and Architecture* as the prime exponent of the new third generation of architects, the first generation being the pioneers of Modernism, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe and second generation were represented by Aalto and Kahn. Giedion recognised in Utzon an appreciation for the past and an interest in anonymous structures; an interest which was not that of an historian, but is rather concerned with gaining architectonic knowledge from the past, to solve contemporary architectural aims. Giedion saw travel as the best means to gain such knowledge and emphasised that “the attitude of the third generation to the past is not to saw out details from their original context. It is more an inner affinity, a spiritual recognition of what, out of the abundance of architectonic knowledge, is related to the present time and is, in a certain sense, able to strengthen our inner security” (Giedion, 1982, p. 670). For Gideon, Utzon heralded a new architectural sensibility; one which represented an optimistic alternative to the nightmare scenario Giedion described in his book *Mechanization Takes Command* (Giedion 1955).

As Kenneth Frampton has more recently commented Utzon belongs to that generation of architects whose belief is “that the primary responsibility of the profession was not only to meet the building needs of society on an ad hoc, daily basis, but also to evolve generic types and modes of practice that were appropriate
to the unprecedented conditions of modern life – those, who, while no longer believing in the manifest destiny of modern architecture to engender a new utopian order, were nonetheless still committed to the notion that architects should attempt to provide models and methods that are appropriate to the conditions of daily life” (Frampton 2003, p. 10). These qualities can be clearly experienced in Utzon’s two low-rise, medium density housing schemes built north of Copenhagen; the Kingo houses, near Helsingør and the housing complex at Fredensborg. According to Frampton these schemes represent an alternative land settlement pattern that has “never been equalled, neither culturally in terms of an accessible imagery nor environmentally from an ecological standpoint” (Frampton 2003, p. 8)

Jørn Utzon’s work is emblematic of a Scandinavian culture that has long prided itself on the attainment of quality in architecture and design, through the simple, honest yet noble synthesis of form, material and function, motivated by social values and relation to context. His Scandinavian sensibility and integrity of design continues the legacy of the earlier, great Nordic architects Gunnar Asplund, Arne Korsmo and most particularly Alvar Aalto. To this specific cultural background Utzon combines a profound fascination for the ancient legacies of the Mayan civilisation, China, Japan and the Islamic world, a sense of architecture as art, an innovative approach to the use of technology and a natural understanding of organic structures in relation to specific context and conditions.

Utzon transcends the schism that has existed between a phenomenological understanding of architecture, with its appreciation of the specific qualities of place and the modernist use of the latest universally applicable technology. The immense breadth of his architecture ranges from the most modest, yet handsome and humane Kingo houses, to the supreme sculptural abstraction and technical innovation of the Sydney Opera House and the understated monumentality of the Bagsværd Church with its poetic undulating ceiling, through to such visionary unrealised projects as the submerged Silkeborg Art Museum and sketch proposal for an underground airport. It is Utzon’s ability to achieve a poetic humane
and tectonic architecture that is rooted in its context, while fully utilizing and pushing the boundaries of industrialisation to pursue that goal that underlies the paradigmatic nature of Utzon’s work that is ever more relevant today, as the award of the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2003 recognised. According to Kenneth Frampton, Utzon’s work is, “Comparable in subtle ways to the protean achievements of Le Corbusier, Utzon’s architecture emerges today as paradigmatic at many levels not least of which is the manner in which from the beginning of his career, he would totally repudiate the assumed superiority of Eurocentric culture” (Frampton 2003, p. 6)

Utzon’s understanding of architecture, broad body of seminal works and most specifically, his masterpiece and perhaps the 20th Century’s most daring and iconic monument, the Sydney Opera House, is an exemplary response to the paradox posited by Paul Ricoeur of “how to become modern and to return to sources, and to return to sources, how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization”. Frampton is aware however that “the concept of a local or national culture is a paradoxical proposition not only because of the present obvious antithesis between rooted culture and universal civilization, but also because all cultures ancient and modern, seem to have depended for their intrinsic development on a certain cross-fertilization with other cultures” (Ricoeur 1961, p. 276-7)

For Frampton, architecture can only be sustained if it “distances itself equally from the Enlightenment myth of progress and from a reactionary, unrealistic impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the pre-industrial past” (Frampton, 1983) Frampton develops upon the writings of Alex Tzonis and Liliane Lefaivre, who first established term Critical Regionalism in “The Grid and the Pathway” (1981) and evokes their statement that “critical regionalism is a bridge over which any humanistic architecture of the future must pass” (Tzonis, Lefaivre, 1981: p178). According to Frampton, Critical Regionalism should adopt modern architecture critically for its universal progressive qualities, but at the same time should value responses that are particular to the context. Emphasis should be placed on topography, climate, light and tectonic form, rather than scenography, and the
creating of architecture that appeals to the tactile senses, rather than the merely visual.

An appreciation of Utzon’s significance in these terms can be gained through the further understanding of his influences, sources of inspiration, working methods and study of his resulting works.

FORMATIVE YEARS

To understand Utzon as one would any creative individual, one should look to the influences and environment that formed his development. Without wishing to take an overtly romantic view, the influence of his father and experiences of his youth, certainly played a profound role in the development of Utzon’s interests and subsequent architectural identity. His father, Aage Utzon, was the director of the Aalborg shipyards and a naval architect with an international reputation for designing yachts renowned for their speed and distinctive curvature of their stern forms, of a type known as Spidsgatter which had its origins in the local herring fishing boats that over time had evolved from the original Viking ships that sailed from this region.

Water connects many diverse cultures and throughout history has served to facilitate profound cultural exchange. It is therefore quite appropriate that the Sydney Opera House, that so profoundly defines its magnificent harbour setting, should have its origins in what was once an important Viking settlement and subsequently ship-building port. As it was Jørn Utzon’s childhood experience of seeing the huge hulls of ships under construction in dry-dock, was later to give him the formal language and also self-confidence to realise the huge boat-like roof-shells of the Sydney Opera House and in so doing has created Sydney’s emblematic image that is so site specific and appropriate to its maritime location. Furthermore it has come to symbolise not only a city, but also an entire nation and through its highly original and innovative synthesis of transcultural influences in specific relation to its context has served to define a break with colonialisation and the emergence of a self-confident
and dynamic multi-cultural society.

It was through working with his father on the design and actual building of boats, Utzon first experienced the joy of seeing something physically take shape, gaining an understanding of the forces and stresses in construction and an appreciation of the inherent qualities of different materials. It is here in the ancient and universal craft of boat building, that Utzon first developed his tectonic approach to design, which Frampton sees as an essential quality of architecture. It was also through the designing of boats with his father that Utzon also learnt to think of complex three-dimensional forms by means of two-dimensional plans and sections. This is evident in the material submitted for the Sydney Opera House competition (1957), which included a beautifully rendered plan, simple sections and elevations, but no perspective illustrations of the exterior. For Utzon, “the plan” as Le Corbusier states in *Towards a New Architecture* “is the generator”. (Weston 2004, p.28)

Through his father Utzon developed a love of outdoor pursuits, such as hunting, fishing, as well as profound passion for sailing. These interests developed in Utzon an acute awareness of and ability to read the natural environment. Furthermore Aage imbued in Utzon his deep appreciation of nature as a source of insight and inspiration, particularly as a designer. Aage studied wave forms and the movement of fish, as a means to making improvements to the design of his boats. Aage Utzon’s personal dictum that one should set aside an early solution if a better one presented itself meant that he continually modified and tested prototypes, as a means of improving and refining his designs in the quest for perfection. These skills and his approach to design he passed on to Utzon. It is this background that informs Utzon’s singular working methods in the field of architecture, his extensive use of models and full scale prototypes, reworking his designs until fully satisfied.
Concurrent with his early development of technical skills and analytical understanding of nature, the teenage Utzon also developed a passion for art and a more poetic, emotional appreciation of nature. He came to know a number of artists, including the Danish artist Poul Schrøder and most notably the Swedish painter Carl Kylberg. Already an accomplished draughtsman, Utzon learnt from Schrøder how to draw freehand with soft expressive lines and from Kylberg, Utzon gained a painter’s eye for nature, in terms of the relationship between colour, form and light. This artistic interest engendered in Utzon openness to the world around him and curiosity in its underlying structures.

Utzon did consider becoming an artist, but was persuaded to follow a more secure career by his uncle Einar Utzon-Frank a distinguished sculptor and Professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Arts in Copenhagen, where Utzon instead chose to study architecture. Utzon’s interest in art and its relation to architecture though has remained throughout his career. He has a particular appreciation for analytical artists such as Picasso, interested in the structure behind appearance and who move freely between different media, developing and articulating conceptual ideas variously in painting, sculpture, ceramics, graphic works and weaving. Similarly Utzon’s profound admiration for Le Corbusier is not limited to his architecture, but also includes his artistic works, as evidenced by his own purchase of a Le Corbusier tapestry. This admiration was reciprocal, as Le Corbusier and also the leading Situationist artist, Asger Jorn with whom Utzon developed a considerable mutual understanding, both accepted commissions for large-scale decorations for the interior of the Sydney Opera House that sadly were never realised. The theme of art integrated in architecture is a recurring one in Utzon’s work, as seen in the collaboration with his artist daughter Lin Utzon at Bagsværd Church and Utzon’s own recent tapestry for the Sydney Opera House, inspired by a painting by Raphael and the cut-out paper collages of Matisse.
THE ROLE OF MENTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF UTZON’S WORK

As a student, Utzon came to the attention of Professor Steen Eiler Rasmussen, the renowned author of *Experiencing Architecture*, who as Utzon’s tutor and mentor formed his subsequent thinking in architecture. Another of Utzon’s notable teachers was the architect Kay Fisker, who extolled the ideal of ‘constructive logic’ as exemplified by the entirely brick built Grundtvig Church, in Copenhagen by P.V. Jensen-Klint. This total commitment to material honesty established a lasting principle for Utzon. The appreciation of material integrity in construction was reinforced by the well-established tradition at the Academy of requiring the students to gain practical training in traditional building skills, such as bricklaying and carpentry as a prerequisite for becoming an architect.

Encouraged by Rasmussen, who passed on his fascination with China, Utzon became familiar with the essential reference works on Chinese architecture, most significantly the *Ying Tsao fa Shi* the Chinese building manual of the enlightened Sung Dynasty (960-1279), which was later to be used by Utzon as an inspiration for the construction of the Sydney Opera House. While among other more contemporary publications that played a role in Utzon’s education, were the early volumes of Le Corbusier’s *Oeuvre Complète*. Inspired by such sources of inspiration both ancient and the most modern, Utzon reacted against the austere formal international modernism as practiced by Arne Jacobsen, whose buildings it was jokingly said could all be modelled with a box of matches, “flat, it was a housing scheme; standing on its long edge, an apartment block; on end, an office tower” (Weston 2002, p. 18). Already as a student Utzon, who had little interest in the Classical tradition, was through the study of vernacular buildings and forms in nature seeking other sources of architectural form.
On graduating in 1940, Utzon moved to Stockholm in neutral Sweden, where he experienced first-hand the work of Gunnar Asplund, whom he greatly admired as the father figure of the moderate Scandinavian modernism, an architecture that for Utzon was humane, socially responsive, related to the landscape and informed by an affinity with nature. Utzon was similarly inspired by Alvar Aalto, who further developed Scandinavian modernism in a more organic direction. In 1944 he attended a lecture by Alvar Aalto, where Aalto made the analogy that a group of houses were like the branch of a flowering cherry tree, where all the flowers are essentially the same, yet each is unique, looking this way or that, expanding or retreating, according to its relationship to its neighbours, and to the sun and wind (Weston, 2002: p. 26). This imagery encapsulated and served as a further catalyst to Utzon’s own evolving thinking on an organic approach to architecture, as later exemplified by his remarkable courtyard housing of the Kingo houses and Fredensborg.

Utzon was to work briefly for Aalto, in 1945. Though he was at his office for a period of only six weeks, Aalto together with Asplund and Korsmo was to remain one of his lasting and most important Nordic mentors. From them, he gained a quintessentially Scandinavian understanding of the relation between an affinity for nature and the emotional, as well as physical needs of the individual. Their humanising approach to modern architecture derived from the inspiration of nature and the appreciation of the natural landscape, as epitomised by the Woodland Crematorium, by Asplund and Lewerentz, just outside Stockholm.

Through his friendship and working with Arne Korsmo, the leading Norwegian modernist architect, whose father was a professor of botany, Utzon and Korsmo developed a shared interest in the logical structures and forms found in nature, as a source of inspiration. An analogy to nature has invariably played a role in the evolution of architecture in all cultures. They also understood that everything in nature was constantly undergoing change and
evolution; that there was no form in nature that was final. This principle they believed should be extended to architecture and rather than create buildings as completed works that neither could be added to or subtracted from without disturbing their perfection of form, they felt architecture should express growth and change. The organic conception of form was, for Utzon, confirmed by D’Arcy Thompson’s *On Growth and Form* (1917), in which he argued that the shape of all plant and animal life has a physical and mathematical basis and thus “form is a diagram of forces” with nature taking the most economical course of action prescribed by physical laws.

In 1948, Utzon wrote that “The true innermost being of architecture can be compared with that of nature’s seed, and something of the inevitability of nature’s principle of growth ought to be a fundamental concept in architecture”. This idea of organic growth is clearly evoked in Utzon’s highly original competition design in 1953 for the Langelinie Pavilion in Copenhagen, which also combined transcultural influences of Chinese pagodas and more specifically Frank Lloyd Wright’s Johnson Wax Laboratory Tower (1947).

However, it is the realisation that in nature infinite variety can be generated by a modest number of elements, that is the genesis of Utzon’s idea of an “Additive Architecture”, that provides a major theme and basis for form in Utzon’s architecture. It is the underlying principle in his courtyard housing, the Espansiva timber housing system, the construction and tiling of the Sydney Opera House, through to the design of a sports complex for Jeddah and a new town centre for Farum. The organic additive principle is perhaps most poetically expressed in an early competition project for a crematorium (1945), where free-standing walls would be extended over time, with one brick added for each deceased person to be commemorated.

Utzon not only uses nature as a source for structural analogy, as in his reference to palm fronds providing the inspiration for the ribs of the Sydney Opera House shells or the joints of birds wings in flight for the intended window mullions. With his artistic sensitivity he also finds poetic metaphors in nature, as sources of creative inspiration. The Crystal Palace proposal for London in 1946
and the Paustian showroom in Copenhagen built in 1987, a time span that indicates the remarkable continuity in Utzon’s thinking, allude to the image of beech forests and the experience of their light-filled openings. While the shimmering quality of the Sydney Opera House shells, which was achieved using matt and ceramic tiles, results from the desire to emulate freshly fallen snow. The image of clouds is a strongly recurring motif in Utzon’s work, as exemplified by Bagsværd Church, where the interior is conceived as a spiritual space for the congregation to gather in an open horizontal landscape beneath billowing concrete ceiling vaults, as if under rolling clouds, through which diffused light enters.

As Frampton explains however, Bagsværd Church is far more than the poetic evocation of the Danish experience of nature, it is for Frampton a prime example of “a self-conscious synthesis between universal civilization and world culture” (Frampton, 1983, p.22) This for Frampton can be discerned in the use of rational, modular pre-fabricated concrete elements, the product of universal civilization in the construction of the industrial barn-like construction of the exterior. Which is then dramatically contrasted by the “far less optimal reinforced concrete shell vault spanning the nave” which according to Frampton “is obviously a relatively uneconomic mode of construction, selected and manipulated for its direct associative capacity – that is to say, the vault signifies sacred space – and second for its multiple cross-cultural references” (Frampton, 1983, pp. 22-23). For Frampton there is no precedent in Western sacred architecture for the highly configurated section of the building and with reference to Utzon’s essay “Platforms and Plateaus” (1963), he sees it clearly deriving from the Chinese Pagoda roof. In addition to the Chinese influence in Utzon’s architecture, it is possible to see in his initial sketches for the section of Bagsværd Church, a prayer to heavenly light in a form of Arabic calligraphy, in which Utzon sees great aesthetic beauty. The multivalent layering of many diverse influences from world culture in combination with modern building methods, results in an authentic and yet contemporary sacred space, that avoids resorting to kitsch symbolism.
For Utzon as with many of his contemporaries, the fascination with natural form, also encouraged an interest in vernacular architecture, long before the subject was widely popularised by Bernard Rudofsky’s pioneering classic *Architecture without Architects* (1964). Vernacular architecture, like structures in nature, having invariably been developed and refined through a continual process of evolution. Following the end of the Second World War, Utzon was at last able to travel extensively, to experience first-hand the traditional and modern architecture that fascinated him. Fired by images of Islamic architecture Utzon set off for Morocco in 1947 where he was greatly impressed by the cohesion and architectural integrity of the desert villages of courtyard houses built entirely with local clay, which unified them with the surrounding landscape that he experienced in his travels through the Atlas Mountains. This unity of material and landscape Utzon had in mind when he later designed the Kingo houses and housing at Fredensborg. In 1949 he travelled to the United States, visiting Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesen West and seeing the Case Study Houses, which together with an appreciation of Japanese vernacular architecture influenced his own subsequent open-plan housing design, initially with the design of his own house (1952) and later development of the similarly open-plan and also open-ended Espansiva housing system (1969).

In Mexico, Utzon visited the pre-Columbian ruins at Chichen Itzá, Monte Albán and Uxmal. The Mayan and Aztec architecture he saw made a profound impression upon him, with its great stone platforms and monumental stairs rising above the dense jungle to reveal the distant surrounding view, which was to firmly establish a defining element in his later major civic projects, most significantly as the podium of the Sydney Opera House. It was Utzon’s vision, alone among all the competitors that recognised that this unique site needed to be understood in terms of its surrounding landscape and being visible from many surrounding vantage points required a sculptural solution with regards its “fifth facade”. Through his reading of topographic maritime charts he was able to appreciate
the particular morphology of the Sydney harbour basin, with its characteristic headlands that rise up just prior to falling into the sea, which he emulated in the forming of the podium. Thus the podium, with its origins in the ancient architectural idea of the raised platform, becomes in Sydney a continuation and evocation of the local natural terrain, developing further Aalto’s notions of building as artificial landscape.

Seemingly floating above the podium, the Sydney Opera House’s signature sail-like roof shells were expressed by Utzon in his conceptual sketches as being like clouds hovering above the sea, both as experienced in nature and as evoked in ancient Chinese temple roofs floating above a stone base. While the choice of ceramic tiles to accentuate the sculptural character of the shells, owes its inspiration to one of Utzon’s favourite buildings, the Great Mosque in Isafahan. Initially the interior of Major Hall of the Sydney Opera House was to have had a multi-faceted ceiling, akin to Islamic *musqarnas* (Weston, 2002) the crystalline-like “stalactite vaults”, that Utzon had admired at the `Friday Mosque´ in Isafahan. While the further influence of Islamic architecture, can be seen in Utzon’s original design for a central pedestrian passage between the halls within the podium, which was intended to have a character reminiscent of the bazaar of Isafahan, which with its diffuse top-lighting influenced his design of the Melli Bank in Teheran in 1959 and much later Bagsværd Church. The Isafahan bazaar and Islamic urban forms served as a model quite overtly for Utzon’s competition proposal for Farum Town Centre (1966) and most appropriately for his other great monumental work, the Kuwait National Assembly (1972). The National Assembly articulates many of the sources and principles that have consistently underpinned Utzon’s architecture. With his passion for traditional Islamic architecture, Utzon looked to the local precedent of the walled city that grows around inner courtyards within its boundaries and the central street or *souk* that provides the collective spine as the organisational principle. In its emulation of Islamic urban form and in its construction it represents a clear statement of Utzon’s principle of Additive Architecture. The distinctive rounded hollow columns reflect Utzon’s commitment to tectonic integrity
and expression of construction, resulting in a Hypostyle Hall-like spatial quality reminiscent of Karnak and which reminds one of Louis Kahn, in its contemporary evocation of ancient archetypical architectural form. While the emblematic billowing suspended roof shading the ceremonial entrance, both achieved a reduction in material through the strength of the double-curved roof beams, but also abstractly articulates the image of surf, as a poetic metaphoric celebration of the meeting between land and sea.

Amongst Utzon’s unrealised works, is one of the outstanding un-built projects of the 20th century, the Silkeborg Museum (1963), designed to house the work of Asger Jorn. Inspired by the Yungang caves near Datong in China, which contain numerous often giant Buddha figures carved out of the stone; the Silkeborg Museum with its cavernous submerged galleries, shaped like emerging crocus bulbs, was intended to liberate the art within sensually curved spaces, which because of their curvature would seem to disappear. Though seemingly an expressive sculptural free form the Silkeborg Museum, like the Opera House, is not as so often misguidedly stated an example of Expressionist architecture in the manner of Frederick Kiesler and Hermann Finsterlin or, in a contemporary comparison, Frank Gehry. Utzon’s architecture is always a pure organic form that is determined by rational geometric principles and, as in Sydney, the complex spherical construction was to be achieved using pre-fabricated elements in accordance with Utzon’s additive principle. The cave-like character of Silkeborg Museum is the natural complement to the platform Utzon was simultaneously working on in Sydney and reveals his equal fascination with the idea of the cave and the notion of prospect and refuge, as also in his own house, Can Lis (1971), on Mallorca.

THE RELEVANCE OF UTZON

From this brief overview of Utzon’s sources of architectural form, it is possible to see that his work does not fit easily within any one single theory of design. Utzon’s architecture is clearly determined
by its intended function and reflects the Spirit of the Age, the prevailing cultural conditions and technology. Yet at the same time his architecture is derived from timeless principles of form and is also clearly the product of a highly creative imagination, who through the use of the latest technology likes as he himself states “to be at the edge of the possible”.

Throughout his career he strived to achieve an authentic tectonic architecture that is specific to given context, through a synthesis of poetics and pragmatism, the exploration of universal transcultural themes in architecture and a pure organic approach to design. This was combined with an understanding that architecture must be structured to allow change and an innovative use of technology to achieve these aims. An approach to design that makes the work of Jørn Utzon an ever more relevant paradigmatic model for today’s avant-garde architects and students exploring the creative possibilities in architecture, in an era where digital tectonic design increasingly emulates the forms found in nature.

However as with the work of Alvar Aalto and Louis Kahn before him, Utzon’s architecture also demonstrates a profound poetic understanding of world culture combined with the benefits of universal modern building technology. An architecture that eschews kitsch historicism and the superficiality of ubiquitous universal civilization, but rather emphasizes the authentic use of materials and finishes; an approach to architecture that many outstanding recent architects, such as Richard Leplastrier, Glenn Murcutt, Rafael Moneo and Peter Zumthor amongst others, aspire to. Utzon’s work epitomizes not only the belief in being truthful to materials, a principle which has underpinned much Modernist architecture, but seems equally paradigmatic for more recent attempts to ground the discipline in what Juhani Pallasmaa has called ‘the veracity of matter’ (Pallasmaa, 1996). With many contemporary buildings being designed to create an instant impression through the media of the photographic image, rather than through direct sensory experience, sadly all too few buildings are designed with their users’ ‘five senses in mind’, as Juhanni Pallasmaa states in The Eyes of the Skin. Pallasmaa advocates the use of natural materials that allow the gaze
to penetrate their surfaces and thereby convince us of `the veracity of matter´. As Richard Weston argues, “emphasizing the richness and specificity of the direct, sensual experience of architecture offers a potent way of countering the all-pervasive anonymity of the `non-places´- supermarkets, hotels, shopping malls, airports – which dominate so much of the public space of what the anthropologist Marc Augé has described as the `supermodern world´” (Weston, 2003: p. 194).

Utzon personally always distanced himself from theoretical interpretations of architecture and society. He had no need of theories to validate his approach to design, rather he had a thirst for universal knowledge and sought out inspiration in that which he experiences in the wider world around him, in a dynamic on-going process that is constantly re-informing his work. It is through an appreciation of his approach to architecture, both in the investigations that his proposals for unrealised projects represent and the realisation of his built works that Utzon provides a profound understanding of the innermost being of architecture. Utzon’s dedicated explorations and refining of significant universal themes in architecture provides an enormous resource for architects in the future. His timeless organic approach to design, rather than historic style ensures his continued relevance. While the humanity of his artistic vision and sensitivity to place combined with a prescient use of technology to achieve these aims, provides a source of inspiration for critical regional architecture in the future.
REFERENCES


THRILLS, VIEWS AND SHELTER AT MAJORCA

chapter 03

Landscape symbols of prospect, refuge and hazard in Utzon’s Can Lis House

John Roberts
INTRODUCTION:
UTZON’S COMPLEXITY, LANDSCAPE’S VALUE

Jørn Utzon’s Sydney Opera House has been popularly named ‘the eighth wonder of the world’ (Tremlett 2002). Kenneth Frampton describes it as ‘one of the most significant monuments of the twentieth century’ (Frampton 2003). Utzon’s Can Lis house on Majorca (see p. 69) is described by historian Richard Weston as ‘one of the finest houses built in the twentieth century’ (Weston 2002). While superlative descriptions of works of architecture can arouse accusations of hagiography, it is also possible to use these claims as a basis for critical inquiry into the high repute of architecture. This paper seeks an explanation for the appeal of Utzon’s Can Lis house, especially its one major element, the detached living room pavilion. Its method is to look closely at the house and the living room as seen through Utzon’s own eyes in photographs and drawings, using landscape symbolism as a critical mode of explanation (Roberts 2010).

Jørn Utzon’s body of work was generally neglected by architectural scholarship, with the exception of Giedion’s promotion of his work in Zodiac magazine (Utzon 1962), and in the fifth edition of Space Time and Architecture (1967). In the past decade, with Utzon’s ageing and his death in 2008, the tides of history and publication may have turned slightly in Utzon’s favour, as testified by the inclusion of his work in historical surveys by Curtis (1996/1982) and Frampton (2007/1980), and increased attention through a growing body of Utzon-focused publications, including: Bløndal’s series of five ‘Utzon Logbooks’; various Utzon monographs (Fromonot 1998, Weston 2002, Ferrer Forés 2008); international Utzon symposiums in Denmark (2003, 2008) and Morocco (2012); a ninetieth-birthday tribute (Keiding, Skou & Amundsen 2008); and exhibitions of Utzon’s work in Australia (2004-05) and Denmark (2008), and numerous academic and popular press articles. There appears to be a considerable and growing interest in Utzon’s oeuvre and ideas; however, his architecture is yet to be ‘discovered’ by major
American writers, and Utzon’s work and ideas have yet to ignite sustained interest in broader theoretical circles.

Frampton observes the ‘irreducible grounding’ of Utzon’s architecture ‘in the opposition of earthwork versus roofwork’, citing Aldo van Eyck’s interest in ‘the unchanging condition of man’, a viewpoint which connects the essentials of Semper’s ‘primitive hut’ with universal human existence and environmental responses. (Frampton 1995.) Utzon’s platforms can be seen as landscape constructs with social purpose, conveying people above the mundane everyday world onto a higher physical and spiritual level. Yet Utzon’s work does not appear to be overtly theoretical. In a 1970 interview, he describes the opportunity offered by the Sydney Opera House project in clear language, relating the Sydney public, players, audiences, and his own co-workers to the ‘new world’ of the Opera House – at that time still unfinished and in the hands of others:

*I made the Opera House for the people of Sydney - and they are much like myself. They are sporty, happy, healthy people who like exciting things. They are daring and said: ‘We can make such a thing as this.’ . . .

*I had the best job anyone could get. I had the possibility with a number of people to concentrate fantastically upon an extraordinarily great structure for a purpose which was not for profit but for the stimulus of the mind.

*It was my function as an architect to support the actors in the house and help them present their drama in a better way; and you could not dream of a better entrance to this new world. When it became clear that our function was to stimulate the audience before the drama, to take them away from their daily lives, the architecture came by itself.

*(Brisbane 1970)

This quote could be taken as simple reflections of an uncomplicated soul. Yet, noting Utzon’s sense of the poetic qualities of the ‘extraordinarily great structure’ in Sydney, it might pay to consider Utzon as a more complex character, and follow Malcolm Quantrill’s advice against underestimating the wiles and complexities of Utzon’s sometime mentor Alvar Aalto: ‘we should not be misled
by [Schildt’s] attempt, albeit a felicitous one, to present Aalto in too simple terms . . . For Aalto was one of the most complex figures ever to work in the sphere of the creative arts.’ (Quantrill 1983, p.2) Similar caution might be advised in any attempt to appreciate motives behind Utzon’s strategies: Utzon was familiar with the work of the older Modern masters – Wright, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Aalto, and Kahn; he had visited their projects and their offices, and knew the figures themselves, and their work. Utzon had also travelled – in Scandinavia and Europe, the USA and Central America, Iran, China, Japan, Morocco – and observed how societies had evolved ways of dwelling and building in response to their own traditions and environmental conditions; Utzon understood the poetics and the practicalities of many places and eras, landscapes and climates. (Weston 2002, p. 28-31)

Utzon needs to be seen, despite his straightforward diction, as a creative figure of high stature, with great synthetic abilities and complexity of method, hailed by Giedion as the inheritor of ‘the third Modern generation’, and re-estimated by Frampton as the equal of Wright, Perret, Mies, Kahn and Scarpa (Giedion 1967; Frampton 2007/1980). Testifying to Utzon’s creative power and complex methods, Peter Myers, who worked for Utzon in Sydney, reviewed Utzon’s method of making ‘gatherings’ of images from books and contemplating ‘simple variations on a theme’, as he did with the ancient Sung dynasty building manual Ying Tsao Fah Shih (1103), and also with Picasso’s reworkings of Velasquez’ Las Meninas: ‘And then he would just look at them, just as his hero Picasso would sit for hours in his studio, happy in his familiar but iconographically significant jumble of paintings and bric-a-brac.’ This method was actively transformative: Utzon produced an ‘incredible synthesis of ancient and modern theories’ in imagining the concert halls not as conventional rooms, but as ‘architectural spaces never before seen . . . perhaps best described [in Utzon’s words] as “portraits of sound itself.”’ Utzon’s imaginative synthesis went further: Myers describes Utzon taking images of Chinese bracket details from the Ying Tsao Fah Shih, ‘and then literally turning them inside out, thus making,
from space-occupying components, space-enclosing envelopes’; the resulting forms were ‘still uncannily within Sung traditions, yet utterly, almost terrifyingly, modern in their configuration.’ (Myers 1998)

Myers demonstrates Utzon’s creative prowess, confirming in detail the greater renown conferred by Giedion and Frampton. It follows that when Utzon includes landscape in his intellectual scope, he recognizes the complexities latent in landscape knowledge, and is willing to exploit its potential for architectural significance and expression.

**Landscape and architectural aesthetics: Appleton and Hildebrand**

The use of landscape within architecture is now understood as a paradigm or a method of thinking that can contribute fresh concepts to the comprehension of architecture beyond production of images. David Leatherbarrow notes that ‘landscape is important to architecture because attention to the materiality, spatiality and temporality of terrain shows how alternatives to the pictorial approach can increase architecture’s cultural content’ (Leatherbarrow 2004, p.10). Juhani Pallasmaa has also argued for greater recognition of the methods, knowledge and aesthetic potentialities of landscape within the ontology and epistemology of architecture. The architectural profession, he maintains, ‘might do better if we began to think of our buildings as microcosms and [following Aalto’s notion] synthetic landscapes instead of seeing them as aestheticized objects.’ (Pallasmaa 2007, p.22) Framed in a landscape-architectural paradigm, Utzon’s work can be investigated using landscape ideas and theories.

In *The Experience of Landscape* (1975) British geographer Jay Appleton proposed his prospect-refuge theory as a part answer to his own question, ‘what is it that we like about landscape, and why do we like it?’ (Appleton 1996, p.1) Prospect-refuge theory derives from a diverse parentage, including geography, landscape painting, art history, literature, landscape architecture, landscape aesthetics
and evolutionary biology. It assumes that human ancestors, when choosing places to camp or raise families, and also while hunting (or being hunted), made functional environmental decisions which influenced both where they lived, and whether they ate and survived amidst predators, prey, and fellow humans.

Grant Hildebrand has used prospect-refuge theory in architecture to evaluate architectural aesthetics in landscape terms: in *The Wright Space* he used prospect-refuge theory to comment on the aesthetic appeal of Frank Lloyd Wright’s houses, endorsing Appleton’s method:

> Appleton also offers a biological rationale, for he points out that as with complexity and order, the selection of juxtaposed conditions of prospect and refuge confers a vital advantage in species survival . . . The intuitive pleasure motive that drives such a choice must logically precede any grasp of its functional value. The choosing of such settings, then, must be driven by an intuitive, immediate pleasure that is felt in the command of prospect and the containment of refuge.
> (Hildebrand 1981, p.31)

Hildebrand argues that the enduring popular appeal of Wright’s house designs is partly due to the presence of architectural elements that symbolize landscape features which once had survival value for, and hence appealed to, archaic *Homo sapiens*. Hildebrand uses Appleton’s theories to propose that the basis of architectural appeal in landscape is emotional, instinctual, heritable, and ultimately biological. The ‘Wright pattern’ in the selected houses operates, he argues, by presenting conditions of habitation like those which, as a species, we have from our earliest beginnings, found to be magnetically appealing. The exteriors of the houses convey rich symbols of both refuge and prospect, which irresistibly draw us to their interiors. They are reached by the narrow passageways through which, in our deepest ancestry, we withdrew from the world of the chase into the cave or grove, the protected and protecting sanctum. There, gathered around the fire hearth, seeing without being seen,
we viewed and view the hunting ground beyond . . . (Hildebrand 1981, p. 165)

Hence the original survival-related responses of early human ancestors to natural environments underpin and connect to contemporary perception of architectural elements as if they were landscape elements – evaluated in a survival aesthetic as lethal, dangerous and ‘ugly’, or accommodating, beneficial and ‘beautiful’.

Zoologist Gordon Orians writes that the goal of behavioural ecology is ‘to explain the ways in which individual organisms make decisions about habitat, shelter, food, and mates.’ (Orians 1998) He maintains that the health, survival, and reproductive success of ancestral humans ‘depended on their ability to seek and use environmental information wisely . . . They needed to understand relationships between habitats and resources and how to evaluate habitats.’ Orians considers humans in both natural and contemporary environments as ‘complex animals with elaborate receptors’ who still must make important binary or ‘polar’ decisions: ‘Not surprisingly, the central nervous system appears to analyze complex informational inputs in ways that enable rapid polar decisions to be made.’ Humans often must organize thoughts and act in polar terms; binary decisions – of great importance – must often be made with great rapidity: of approaching or avoiding objects and spaces; of eating or not eating foods; of fleeing or pursuing; of mating or not. (Orians 1998, p.24) Such instantaneous reactions are the biological substrate beneath architectural aesthetic preferences: the human nervous system would appear to trigger spatial preference in artificial environments in the same way it triggers preference for objects and spaces in natural environments.

Neuroscientist Steven Pinker in his popular text How the Mind Works connects human emotion and habitat selection. Mental processes required to ‘prefer’ or ‘select’ architecture must combine emotion and intellect to react to the architectural environment, as they do to a natural environment or habitat:
Every animal is adapted to a habitat. Humans are no exception . . . Some places are inviting, calming, or beautiful; others are depressing or scary. The topic in biology called ‘habitat selection’ is, in the case of Homo sapiens, the same as the topic in geography and architecture called ‘environmental aesthetics’: what kinds of places we enjoy being in . . . The geographer Jay Appleton succinctly captured what makes a landscape appealing: prospect and refuge, or seeing without being seen.

(Pinker 1997, p.374-76)

Appleton’s prospect-refuge theory provides a theoretical lens of landscape to investigate Utzon’s architecture; its premises, briefly set out here, are partly rooted in an evolutionary understanding of human environmental behaviour, noted in Pinker and set out by Orians and others. (Orians 1998; Orians & Heerwagen 1992; Wilson 1984)

A house, a pavilion, a living room: Can Lis

Jørn Utzon’s Can Lis house is a compound of four sandstone pavilions arranged off-square, set amongst pines and acacias, enfroneting the sea, facing just east of south along a sandstone cliff, twenty metres above the Mediterranean, near Porto Petro on the south-eastern coast of Majorca. The largest, westerly pavilion is a compound of social spaces, an open courtyard flanked by covered colonnades, with kitchen and dining spaces to the southern (rear) side of its square composition. The other three pavilions – the living room, guests’ or childrens’ rooms, and a main bedroom, are linked by a surrounding stone wall and small dry courtyards. (Fig.1.) Their living areas look seaward through large viewing apertures, described by Fromonot as ‘viewing barrels’ or ‘landscape traps’, alcove-sized stone reveals glazed without mullions in the manner of Sigurd Lewerentz. (Utzon 2004, p.368-87; Fromonot 1998, p.207; Weston 2002)

The siting and location of the Can Lis buildings may have conceptual beginnings in old settlements or temple complexes, as noted by Utzon:
“All the building complexes that have really inspired me – the desert cities in Morocco, for example – have been pushed into position in relation to the place, and in relation to the sun. Then they take on the character that the old cities or Greek temples have. It’s about putting the houses and apartments together such that they harmonize with the landscape and thus provide the best conditions for living there.”

(Utzon 2008)

The living room is a tall stone box with a couch built at its centre. Timber doors connect a vista and passage from a courtyard through a colonnade with seven timber doors, into the main living space. On the west side of the room a small fireplace sits in the wall; on the east wall a column stands beside the couch, assisting roof support. Five viewing apertures fan outwards. Photographs communicate a calm space where a family might gather on the curved stone couch. Weston observes the room’s processes, noting also its contrasts of dark and light:

From the seat one prospects the sea through the deep, angled reveals and sloping soffits which guide the gaze out and down. Sunlight fills the openings but all around the walls are gathered in shade.

(Weston 2002, p.382)

The design of the living room would seem to have its beginnings in a process of gathering people in architecture’s commodious volumes. Utzon spoke of the centrality of the human in his designs:

“I feel that I began from inside. I consider that if I design a space for people to meet in, I place them around a table, pour some light over them, and encase them with walls, and perhaps make an eye-level opening for a view onto, say, a tree . . . Intuition is the architect’s main way of figuring things out.”

(Utzon 1978)

Utzon’s laconic design process, energized by careful observation and wit, combines essential ingredients in sequence – space, people,
table and seats, light, encasing walls, a universal view recalling Barragan (or perhaps Beckett). Utzon’s method – seemingly so intuitively straightforward, yet, as every designer discovers, so elusive and labyrinthine in practice – seems in fact to have been enacted at Can Lis, by intuition and by eye; Weston notes of the fine-tuned location of the central family couch: ‘the angle was determined by eye not instruments, and for all its permanence it retains an invitingly relaxed air.’ (Weston 2002, pp.378-82.) Having seen inside room and process, it is possible to consider the appeal of Utzon’s main Can Lis space.

PROSPECT, REFUGE AND HAZARD: VIEWS, SHELTER AND THRILLS

Appleton’s thinking on landscape aesthetics offers concepts and terms to open a landscape-based discussion of preference for Utzon’s Can Lis house. Appleton’s landscape concepts include his large-scale habitat theory, which holds that the aesthetics of site and setting are related to the potential of a broad environment (a river valley, a stretch of coastline) to furnish food and shelter resources suitable for long-term biological survival and reproduction. At a more localized and short-term scale he proposed his prospect-refuge theory, whereby real or apparent opportunities for views and access (prospect) are complemented with real or apparent security, safety and visual enclosure (refuge). Appleton notes that ‘We are concerned, in short, with functional definitions, proposed in strategic terms’ (Appleton 1996, p.77). Appleton’s theoretical formation also includes what he terms hazard symbolism, the thrilling sensation of being close to, yet safe from, physical danger – cliffs and cliff edges, wild water or weather, animate danger, exposure to heat or cold, etc. – which people enjoy in experiencing extreme natural or built conditions: exposed open spaces, steep walls, high ledges, wave-swept jetties, windswept platforms. Appleton argues that exposure to a hazard ‘is matched by perception of the hazard and followed by refuge from it’: the presence of the hazard may create
fear, triggering a survival response in the form of immediate rapid flight to a secure place of outlook, a place where a person may ‘see without being seen’. (Appleton 1996).

In what follows, some emphasis is given to hazard symbolism in Utzon’s architecture at Can Lis. The concept of hazard is not widely used in architectural discourse, yet it seems to offer a developed understanding of Utzon’s work. An exemplary sense of delight in hazard can be seen in Utzon’s drawings for the unbuilt Langelinie Pavilion, Copenhagen (1953). Utzon draws an elegant, barely-dressed, ten-storey harbourside pagoda where dozens of figures indulge in high-spirited recreation and party activities at the extremities of the tree-like building. People walk and gesture and gather in groups, sitting and eating and drinking, along dangerous edges, paths, platforms, balconies and seats, in exorbitant and defiantly risky physical settings without handrails, above sailing boats, cold water and a bare platform. At once childlike, reckless and glamorous, Utzon’s Langelinie drawings offer a thrillseeking 1950s architectural embodiment of youthful virility, extreme sports, and a carousing Mad Men ethic, a work that would vaporise all hope of ‘compliance’ with safety regulations. (Weston 2002, pp.48-53.) Utzon’s Langelinie can be seen as a joyous embodiment of hazard symbolism.

Jay Appleton also describes hazard symbolism in terms that do not disappoint the architectural or landscape thrillseeker:

To experience the sublimity of a storm wave one does not have to plunge into it and taste the real sensation of being smashed to pieces . . . The knowledge that we can see the wave and assess its potential before it breaks, and that we can observe it from a place of safety just, only just, beyond the reach of that potential, this is what enables us to find meaning and excitement in the whole experience. Exposure to the hazard is matched by perception of the hazard and followed by refuge from it. (Appleton 1996, p.85-86.)
The same desire to thrill also characterizes Utzon’s winning drawings for the Sydney Opera House, with figures promenading through an ‘interior as a continuous landscape’ (Weston 2002, p.117), ascending towards an artificial sky-facing cliff-edge under gold-leaf ceilings: glamour and the physical challenges of climbing an ersatz Sydney headland characterize the eye-catching sketches of a building whose experiential and constructional ‘extremeness’ have never faded, in both its reality and its mythology. Risk is ubiquitous in the Opera House project, even as built: its roofs which become walls; its hovering mass; its unmeasurable altitude; its rooftop walkways and perilous summits; its broad treeless stairs and platforms utterly open to views and weather; its harbourside paths; its sheer artificial sides; and its still unbelievable cliffside paths and stairs flanking the auditoria – pure landscape extremities built as designed by Utzon, still without handrails, and never yet opened to public use. Weston uses at least twenty images (Weston 2002, p.159-201) to capture the thrill experienced by millions of everyday visitors to this ‘eighth wonder.’

Further clarifying his symbolism of landscape experience, Appleton describes how environmental objects can symbolize hazards, prospects and refuges:

When we talk of a ‘hazard’ we may mean, on the one hand, a crocodile, a bush fire or a human enemy or, on the other, simply a feeling of exposure to an unidentifiable or even an imaginary and perhaps non-existent threat.

When we talk of a ‘prospect’ we may mean, on the one hand, what we can see from an observation post specially selected or even constructed to command a view of a piece of country in which there may or may not be some potential threat or, on the other, simply the sense of not being shut in, such as may be experienced, for instance, when one looks upward to a bright sky.

When we talk of a ‘refuge’ we may mean, on the one hand, a hiding-place screening us from a hostile observer, or a cottage sheltering us from the real adversities of the weather, or, on the other, a sense of being enclosed, overshadowed, protected by some ineffective
barrier, such as a cloud, against an unidentified and perhaps wholly imaginary source of danger. (Appleton 1996, p.75. Reset by this author.)

A mix of perception and reaction to landscape is implicit in Appleton’s theoretical formations. In Appleton’s examples above, there is also a close and direct correspondence between landscape and architecture in the contrasts between physically built examples – observation post, cottage – and the sense of being in either open or enclosed unbuilt natural space – exposed under bright sky, or protectively shadowed by a cloud.

Utzon’s sketch of the Can Lis living room may be seen as a poetic device, a metonym, a few lines: the part represents the whole house in his sketch for Denys Lasdun (see fig. 1, p. 80). What do people like about this room, and why do they like it? I plan to argue that images of the Can Lis living room balance prospect symbolism with refuge symbolism and include hazard symbolism. This landscape symbolism, and its volume and quality, helps make it a complete and compelling work of architecture.

**PROSPECT: a forward view**
Prospect derives from Latin *pro-*, forward + *specere* to look: *prospectus*, a forward view. (Partridge 1959) The Can Lis room ‘looks forward’ from the land. The plan, like a handprint, with five window bays outspread like fingers, and a column between each one, extends seaward from an entry patio, through a shady colonnade with seven timber doors, to a square room dominated by a stone seat with a small fire in the west wall. In section, the room is a five-metre tall volume on a stone platform, between a wall of low trees and a twenty-metre cliff falling to the Mediterranean Sea.

The site is a place of prospect, a natural platform with a view, as Utzon said, ‘reaching uninterrupted to Africa.’ (Weston 2002, p.371) The view pre-dates the building: the room mediates the threats, and intensifies the thrills, of the natural place: the view, the glare of sunlight, the elements and the cliff edge site. People need the architecture as shelter, while the architecture translates the site’s
1. Sketch of Can Lis, 2. Photo of Can Lis living room
intensities to a human observer.

Utzon’s parti plan (fig. 1, p. 80) shows a room with a courtyard and a fan of complex-looking window openings. The section parti resembles a hat, and a hand on the brow: elemental shelter, plus outlook. The section reinforces the view out through the window’s extraordinary brow and eyelid structure: there is great emphasis on seeing, and looking out. The eye’s sill is the sharp floor edge, from where the house platform falls out of sight to a cliff edge.

Appleton’s technical terms of landscape symbolism, such as direct prospects (panoramas and restricted vistas), vantage points (places potentially offering extended views), horizontal vistas and peepholes are used, below, to identify and discuss prospect, refuge, and hazard symbolism in Utzon’s architecture.

The couch is the room’s primary vantage-point. Appleton says ‘the satisfaction of seeing is only a part of the satisfaction of achieving an advantageous position’. (Appleton 1996, p.80) The satisfaction of seeing from the couch is heightened if one walks to the window bays, which become secondary vantage-points, offering vistas unavailable from the primary vantage-point (fig. 2, p. 80). Lounge, window bays and horizon align in a multiple vista, an outward prospect through multiple openings. High in the west wall is a tiny peephole window, a vista symbol, intensified by height and inaccessibility. A brief finger of entering light and its impracticality as a ‘window’ only enhances its landscape symbolism.

The horizon is a secondary vantage-point, offering a promise of information beyond. Appleton considers the tantalizing margin of the horizon, a ‘here-and-there’ tension between the seen and the imagined: ‘there is nothing in the landscape which so powerfully evokes that fascination and that pleasure as the horizon’. (Appleton 1990, p. 28-34) In Pi Michael’s film Skyer, Utzon enjoys his real horizon prospect: ‘Here there are big windows. Here the horizon is what counts. We sit here in peace, with the horizon, sea and clouds and stones and that’s it.’ (Michael 1995) He repeats ‘here’, speaking...
from the primary vantage-point, the couch by the fire, a place to enjoy the Mediterranean horizon; which brings us to refuge symbolism.

**REFUGE: without being seen**

Jørn Utzon observed landform, vegetation, and the effects of winds and light on animals and people. He describes the architectural site: ‘It’s close to being a hunter, knowing what the birds do when it rains, because they have a sense for the best places.’ (Michael 1995.) Architect John Pardey relates how Utzon’s father passed on ideas of hunting:

. . . the hunter would not stalk deep in the forest nor out in the open, but keep to the fringe – or the ‘eyebrow’, as it is expressed in Danish – where the trees meet the open landscape. Walking within the fringe of overhanging branches, the hunter has prospect and refuge in a place both commanding and safe. Utzon sees his house as a built expression of placing man on the fringe of landscape.

(Utzon 2004, p.9)

Appleton interprets refuge as ‘an environmental condition . . . conducive to hiding or sheltering.’ (Appleton 1996, p.260-262) Refuge derives from Latin fugare, to flee, hence refugium, a place to flee back to. (Partridge 1959.) Utzon describes Can Lis’ architecture as of ‘sandstone, sky and sea’ (Utzon 1984, p.226); Utzon’s pavilion is formed of concave spaces of actual refuge – window reveals, doorways, a colonnade, a courtyard, a fireplace, a couch, an enclosing ceiling volume. By contrast there are also bright, naked, symbolic surfaces: the sun-stroked wall, a sunlit stone floor, an outdoor terrace, plus horizon, clouds, and water beyond – shining, flat, prospect-dominant surfaces, inside, around and beyond (see fig. 2, p. 80).

Utzon says, ‘It is a sandstone house on the edge of the cliffs . . . It houses only one single room, totally dominated by one big, curved couch which embraces the whole family.’ (Utzon 1984, p.226) In Utzon’s drawing, the building plan seems to offer a ‘functional’ hide – strong walls, multiple openings, solid masses. The section
promises *shelter*: the floor forms a platform, and a high rectilinear ceiling signals geometric, organized shelter, not merely ‘the fortuitous sanctuary of a cave or forest’, as Appleton distinguishes. (Appleton 1996, p.92)

Appleton distinguishes between refuges of *artificial* and *natural* ‘origin’: buildings suggest artificial refuge, while nests are natural refuges. (Appleton 1996 pp.91-92) The Can Lis lounge appears to offer *composite artificial and natural refuge symbolism*: a stone nest inside a sheltering sandstone building; the hard room and the soft couch complement and reinforce each other’s sheltering character. In Utzon’s image the couch seems larger than the ceiling, monitoring the room and the view and cushioning the entire room in its upward embrace; it seems to evoke its own acoustic quality, of cushioning and dampening the sound of the hard room, in a way that a bought furnishing could not do. Ultimately its cushions are thick soft forms of little mass above a solid stone platform, like clouds on a sea surface, recalling Utzon’s famous sketches from ‘Platforms and Plateaus’. (Utzon 1962)

It is also worth looking at Utzon’s image to consider the roles of the windows: what do the windows actually do? Only two of the viewing bays offer a view out. The western window, at least in the image, is a source of direct afternoon light, which pours dazzlingly onto the floor and illuminates the room. The two easterly windows appear in Utzon’s photograph to be vestigial, at least for major views: they may well be for morning light, but it is difficult to know definitely from this image.

**HAZARD: a bit of disaster**

Prospect and refuge are complemented by symbolism of hazard. Hazard symbols appear in the Can Lis house in its siting, its planning, its sections and detailed elements, its experience, and even in sketches and photographs that include the cliff and the water of its site. Although it is impossible to determine Utzon’s original intentions, his own sketches and photographs seem to cut out unnecessary details and tell a story; drawings by other hands
are less poetic, and more all-inclusive, and many of the (albeit excellent and professional) photographs catch a richness of surface at the expense of the harder, clearer poetics of Utzon’s eye.

One Utzon photograph captures the sense of prospect from the Can Lis courtyard (see below). A cloudbank fills the sky to the south, yet bright sun shines through almost miraculously through an aperture across the wind-stirred sea-surface, throwing strong shadows onto the courtyard. The clear light on the sandstone platform rhymes with the light on the ocean; the silhouettes of the stone walls and colonnade are clear like the cast shadows, contrasting with the image’s dark and bright background elements. Utzon has photographed a scene of powerful prospect from a protected corner of the outdoor room; a keen eye seems to comprehend the combination of light, cloud, shadow, water, wind and geometry, and the play between here and there that establishes prospect symbolism.

Another photograph – not by Utzon – captures the sense of hazard

*Can Lis courtyard in sun, sea surface with clouds*
on the storm-swept Can Lis main courtyard: wave spray flies above roofs, darker clouds fill the sky (see below). The sense of exposure to water hazard is unmistakeable; the windblown salt spray on faces and windows is a physical reminder of the risks of danger for humans and buildings.

Hazard stands out, making mischief, risk and surprise: how many ‘great houses’ are as exposed to risk as Can Lis? Fallingwater and the Villa Malaparte spring to mind with their perilous exposures to waterfalls and cliffs, and their open terraces; intriguingly, other houses may also be more hazard-symbolic than one might anticipate or recognize. Consider the following: Rick Joy’s and Richard Neutra’s desert houses, and Wright’s Taliesin West, in the arid American landscape; Murcutt houses in the fire-prone Sydney bush; Leplastrier’s Bellingen house with its sacrificial ‘skink’ deck exposed to floods; Mies’ Farnsworth house on a flood plain; Villa Savoye and Venturi’s house sitting exposed in green plots; OMA’s Villa dall’Ava with its rooftop pool and skinny columns, and Frank Gehry’s house with its cactus-dominated backyard and bare metal
walls; even Aalto’s Muuratsalo house rises beside a granite boulder, only metres from a steep rocky edge that falls to deep water. Perhaps hazard is more prevalent and important in the estimation of architecture than has been credited to date.

_Hazard_ is from Arabic _al-zahr_, a dice game, Spanish _azar_, unforeseen disaster, and French _hasard_, chance. (Partridge 1959.) While prospect and refuge elements symbolize one’s potential ability to see and to hide, hazard symbolism engenders a perverse pleasure by implying the nearness of something which may threaten or disturb one’s equilibrium or safety, and creating ‘the apparent paradox of an enjoyable fascination with danger.’ (Appleton 1990, p.79)

At Can Lis, _impediment, deficiency, and incident_ hazards are discernible in the landscape and the room, appearing to threaten ‘the achievements of our biological needs.’ (see below) _Impediment_ hazards are ‘natural’ – cliffs, dense vegetation – or ‘artificial’ – walls or hedges - potentially blocking an escape from danger; _deficiency_ hazards are less dramatic, threatening to deprive the observer of

*Can Lis house seen from east*
food, drink, shelter or shade. There are also *incident* hazards in the form of ‘locomotion hazards’, with potential for serious falls from high places such as precipices or abrupt edges. (Appleton 1996, p.85-90)

The image is thrilling, in a *natural impediment* sense: an abrupt cliff edge with no visible escape route, the dark ocean below, the impenetrable vegetation; nature offers no escape, no hide. The rocky landscape extends the sense of ‘deficiency hazard’: no water or edible plants, and little shade or shelter. Their artificial counterparts are the high flanking walls of the tall box of the building, its stone construction, and its fortress-like appearance, resisting entry or penetration.

Utzon’s image of Can Lis on its clifftop site also echoes images of a pre-Columbian Mayan building from Tulum, in Yucatan (see below) The building, known as ‘El Castillo’, with its high, cubic stone mass and its very small apertures, functioned as a navigation aid by day and by night for ancient trading canoe sailors navigating the

‘El Castillo’, Mexico
Yucatan coast: by day the blue sky was visible through tiny window openings, whose alignment indicated a safe channel; by night, fires in the windows similarly warned of dangerous reefs and guided voyagers through safe waters. The building offered both a real and inverted prospect; its apparent impenetrability was also real, as its only practical openings related to the sea. Utzon visited Yucatan in the 1940s, and most likely knew of ‘El Castillo’, if not necessarily its navigational functions, which were discovered only in 2002. (Wikipedia s.v. Tulum.)

Inside the Can Lis house, the absence of even a sill at the bottom of the window bays creates an example of *locomotion hazard*: just as the cliff edge has no wall or rail to make it safe, so the floor extends precipitously and without a level change towards the horizon. *We are not really safe here*, the mind says; the absence of compromise in the details is subtle and exciting. These natural and artificial elements – rocks, scrub, sun; walls, floors, furniture, windows – are combined about and within Utzon’s architecture at Can Lis. They provide pleasure to the observer, on Appleton’s basis, that if we can view a hazard ‘from a place of safety just, perhaps only just, beyond the reach of that potential [to inflict harm], this is what enables us to find meaning and excitement in the whole experience.’ (Appleton 1996, pp.85-86.) Hazard symbolism works to intensify and complement the prospect and refuge elements in the architecture.

**CONCLUSION**

This paper suggests that part of the appeal of Utzon’s Can Lis house lies in the contrived presence of compositional elements symbolizing prospect, refuge and hazard, which trigger intuitively pleasurable responses in viewers. There are also, of course, other components of culture, knowledge, and a viewer’s experience, which affect architectural perception. Yet these pleasure-giving prospect, refuge and hazard elements connect us, via landscape, with biological human beginnings and the natural world. The deep-seated emotional appeal of Utzon’s architecture would seem to be
at least partly connected to archaic human feelings for landscape.

Pallasmaa, a practising architect and theorist (though not a philosopher) describes architecture as a potentially ideal medium for active philosophising:

I cannot in fact name a discipline possessing a more complex and essentially more conflicting grounding in the lived reality and human intentionality. Architecture is essentially a form of philosophising by means of its characteristics: space, matter, structure, scale and light, horizon and gravity. Architecture responds to existing demands and desires at the same time so that it creates its own reality and criteria – it is both the end and the means. Moreover, authentic architecture surpasses all consciously set aims, and, consequently, is always a gift of imagination and desire, willpower and foresight. (Pallasmaa 2007, p.17.)

This philosophy inherent in architecture may in fact be significant and valuable to the field of philosophy – perhaps philosophy needs architecture more than architecture needs philosophy. It is a matter of further research to pursue this and associated questions of landscape symbolism and architecture. It may also be appropriate to ask further, in light of Pallasmaa’s comments, whether the authenticity, reality and intentionality which he seeks may in fact be more directly, more poetically, and more hazardously, sought in landscape rather than architecture? It is possible that the variety of landscape, including its ‘space, matter, structure, scale and light, horizon and gravity’ may well be of value to future researchers in art, architecture and landscape architecture. The experience of the beauty of the natural world would be a bonus of great worth, and a prompt and a basis for further research into the compelling and interesting space between architecture and landscape.
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P. 69: Can Lis house, plan drawing, drawing by Jørn Utzon - Source: Fromonot 1998
P. 80, fig. 1: Can Lis parti sketch, plan and section, sketch by Jørn Utzon - Utzon 1984
P. 80, fig. 2: Can Lis living room, photo by Jørn Utzon - Source: Utzon 2004
P. 84: Can Lis courtyard in sun, sea with clouds, photo by Jørn Utzon - Source: Utzon 2004
P. 85: Can Lis courtyard in stormy weather, photo by Tage Lyneborg - Source: Utzon 2004
P. 86: Can Lis house seen from east, Jørn Utzon - Source: Utzon 2004
ARCHITECTURE AND CAMPING
chapter 04

The studio as a coastline

Poppy Taylor and Mat Hinds
THE TASMANIAN CONDITION

We have found many sympathies between where we live, this symposium and Utzon’s legacy. Our professional education has been honed by the sensibility Utzon left for us in Australian architecture, and it continues as a personal influence for both our teaching as well as practice.

Over the past four years we have organised a series of camps for Masters of Architecture students from the University – in a format not dissimilar to the JURN workshop in Morocco. So we thought to share some things with you that we have experienced through these camps. However, before we do so, it’s important to give you some context as to the condition in which we live and work.

We’re not sure if Utzon ever visited Tasmania, but if he did, he may have found a microcosm of the monumental conditions he explored in his own work. Tasmania is located on the fringe of the great Southern Ocean (see below). It shares its ecological heritage with

Tasmania on the fringe of the great Southern Ocean
Patagonia – nearly half a world-away – belonging to a primeval geological chain of land. Located as it is in the path of the roaring 40s, Tasmania’s coastline is hammered by ferocious winds and swell. We are always seeking the sun, and always seeking the shelter from strong wind (see below).

For it’s size, Tasmania has a complex and epic landscape. People have inhabited the island for at least 30,000 years. Surrounded on all sides by expanses of ocean and sky, Tasmania’s horizon extends in each direction across a vast aquaplane, which casts a very particular light across the landscape, recalling Utzon’s early appreciation for solid ground, set against forms in light (see p. 99).

In Tasmania, the first peoples of the island, like their mainland Australian counterparts, formed a sophisticated culture within the land. This culture was decimated, and nearly destroyed, in a matter of decades by colonial ambition at the turn of the 19th century. The traditional language was lost – and with it a way of dwelling in the land.

_Tasmania’s coastline_
At the same time as Britain was establishing intentions to colonise
the Eastern seaboard what was called “The Great Southern Land”,
and planning to emigrate thousands of convicts and settlers to the
new frontier, the early French explorers were engaging relatively
peacefully with the aboriginal people along the southern coastline.
Upon arriving on the isolated shore of an area now known as Recercche
Bay in Tasmania’s south, the French captain D’Entrecasteaux wrote
in his ships’ log:

I shall attempt the vain task of conveying the feelings I experienced
at the sight of this solitary harbour, placed at the ends of the earth,
and enclosed so perfectly that one could think of it as separated from
the rest of the universe. Everything reflects the rustic estate of raw
nature. Here one meets at every step, combined with the beauties
of nature left to itself, signs of its decay, trees of enormous height
and corresponding width, without branches along the trunk, but
crowned with foliage always green: some appear as old as the world;
so interlaced and compacted as to be impenetrable, they support
other trees equally large but dropping with age and fertilizing the

_Tasmania’s horizon across a vast aquaplane_
ground with debris reduced to rottenness. Nature in all its vigour, and at the same time wasting away, seems to offer the imagination something more embellished by industry and by civilized man; wanting to conserve only the beauty, he has destroyed the charm; he has removed its unique character, that of being always ancient and always new.

For Britain, the aboriginal presence was an obstacle to aims of expansion. In 1835, British legislation was passed that conferred upon the entire Australian continent the doctrine of *terra nullius* – or “empty land”. In so far as the British Crown was concerned, the continent belonged to no one prior to settlement. *Terra Nullius* was executed on the basis of deep misunderstanding of the relationship between the aborigines and the land: in indigenous society, land was not a commodity. It could not belong to people, because the aboriginal people considered they in fact belonged to the land. The concept of entitlement was alien, and so the British Crown assumed right to the land, on the basis that no single individual or community could claim otherwise.

*Mayority Deliberate unawareness of the landscape*
The cultural assimilation that ensued was acutely delivered in Tasmania. Every attempt was made to transpose the ideals of Britain against a landscape that was foreign, at times forbidding, and certainly misunderstood. It is reinforced today, in the way that the majority of new housing is built in Tasmania, showing a deliberate unawareness of the landscape (see p. 100).

Just as it is possible that a person might own and live in a typical brick-veneer, it is also possible for the same family to enjoy a shack. Tasmania’s shack culture is far more vernacular. It belongs to the tectonic tradition of timber huts. The same tectonic existed in the early burial mounds and bark-shelters of the Tasmanian aborigines. Often these informal buildings have sought to establish a far more immediate relationship to the landscape condition and in so doing, these buildings serve to starkly contrast the frailty of the human condition against the rawness of the landscape.

The Camps
It is on this basis that we organised the first of four workshops (see below). Utzon’s work is very present as an influence in these
experiences, particularly as it concerns the natural and human, and the connection between the two. In teaching at the School of Architecture and Design, in the north of the island, it is possible to see the geological influence of the land entering the ethos of the school, particularly through its spatial configuration and large ply-wood clad cliff-faces. However, architecture, as much as it is procured in a studio setting, is also immediate to its condition. The idea of these workshops was to remove the studio from the familiar learning environment, in order that some underlying principles might be discerned. In this way the experiences have always sought to be immersive. If it rains, we get wet. If it is warm, we swim or seek shade. And at night, in the tradition of camping in Tasmania, we gather about an open fire and ‘have a yarn’ (see below).

During the first series of camps, held on Tasmania’s north-eastern coastline, other creative thinkers and practitioners were invited to open the discussion beyond architectural themes. On one such evening after a communal dinner of baked vegetables and wallaby,
a guest – the Tasmanian poet Peter Hay – started his contribution by admitting that he was unsure exactly what he might offer to the gathering: ‘I’m not an architect,’ he confessed, ‘nor do I profess to know anything about building. I am a writer. And if there is anything that I can offer you, it is through that lens. When I consider what it is that you do, I can say this to you: architecture is a great deal like story-telling. In practicing architecture you manifest the stories that are latent in a site. You bring them to bear on our existence.’

At the previous Utzon Symposium, Rafael Moneo spoke about the generosity of the platform of the Opera House, in conveying to the people of Sydney an appreciation of the entire structure of Sydney’s bays. This observation exemplifies Peter Hay’s point. It relies on a deep understanding of a site (see below). At the same symposium, William Curtis referred to the Opera House as a geological event in the harbour: an extraordinary gesture that is civic and humane in its dimensions. Richard Weston has written very clearly about this quality in Utzon’s work:

Walking around his built landscapes we feel of a piece with
hilltops and clouds, promontories and caves, in a particular place but part of a larger, shared world.’

While perhaps not immediately apparent, the whole premise of these workshops in such isolated circumstance belies a basis that is architectural. Just as in Utzon’s work, the intent is to ground our architectural understanding in elemental experience. The coastal location of the camps has always been an important consideration. Much of traditional life in Tasmania has concentrated to the island’s margins, and people have interacted there for eons. As a way into the experience of the camps, we ask the groups to blindfold each other and wander, in an attempt to come to terms with the landscape, without “seeing” it (see below). Each time we ask this of the group, we have noticed a pattern in the way that people move across the terrain. Groups would gravitate towards locations that were in the lee, elevated, and over the prospect of the country: just as in Utzon’s observations for his house in Can Lis, and just as the aborigines had done, when they gathered on middens for thousands of years prior.

1. Costal landscape, 2. Blindfolded wandering on site
Having found a site – we then have groups demarcate a 3m x 3m area, with builder’s line, that is absolutely level, and at least 300mm at one corner above the terrain. The task, more often than not, proves difficult. It brings attention very quickly to issues of siting, as well as the ethical considerations of making a more permanent impact (see below). This conflict arises out of how we reconcile our presence in the land. It is perhaps also more broadly symptomatic of the incapacity of our society to properly place itself in the land – the concern is always that by virtue of our living, we destroy the very fabric of the land in which we seek to settle, rather than establish deeper awareness and connection with the cultural and environmental dimensions of the country.

**Drawing**

Groups are then engaged in modes of conveying the detail of each location. *How* we observe is crucial. This is why drawing is so important to us in this profession. Le Corbusier once said that

*Site analysis: Attention to details on site*
he preferred drawing to speaking, because through drawing it is impossible to lie.

At the most recent camp on Maria Island we invited the artist John Wolseley to attend. His work is deeply immersed in its condition, and through it he has sought to deconstruct the notion of the artist as a purveyor of the landscape. [NS] In John’s practice the land itself bears influence and authorship in his artmaking. He spends weeks in isolated pockets of Australia’s wilderness, burying his drawings, rubbing paper against burnt trees, and letting animals, birds and insects pass affect on the canvas.

On Maria Island, John spoke about drawing having agency, as he literally struck and threw pieces of charcoal at the pages of his sketchbook. He also spoke about the wandering quality of the line – and how through drawing we can search as much as describe. In architecture, drawing is often used as a means of conveying and testing a preconceived idea. Considering it with the immediacy that John advocates, drawing itself takes licence over the processes
of the creative act. At the 2008 Utzon Symposium in Aalborg, Denmark, the architectural critic and historian William Curtis spoke of a kind of weight in Utzon’s drawing. He recounted that in watching Utzon draw, it was possible to discern a pressure, a kind of consideration, in the line. This force, he surmised, resulted from the processes of Utzon’s mind ‘wandering’ throughout his vast reservoir of experiences. Its an extraordinary observation in many ways, because it tells us something of how we think as architects, as well as how we rely upon experiential forces in affecting the way we engage design. In the same way, the exquisite drawings produced in the workshops clearly begin to open ground, by suggesting architectural marks against imprints of the land (see p. 107).

There are many distinctions that can be drawn between Utzon, and these architecture camps. Because in bringing into relation the human and the natural, we acknowledge something embedded. In our relatively young practice, we have begun to further expand on these ideas. Our small studio, which is the conversion of an existing outhouse, borrows some of the qualities of immediacy with Tasmania that we seek to invest in our work, teaching and life together. It is a small space, with luminous white walls that, because of their translucency, catch the shadow of nearby Tasmanian Blue Gums and passing clouds, and that by night returns light back into our garden. Our work is surrounded by shifts in sunlight, shade and the sound of rain and distant ocean (see p. 108).

Our understanding of whether natural places remain outside of the realm of our experience, and therefore of our consideration, is tempered against the fact that the circumstances tried to establish through these camps is an appreciation that, while the in which we live are, by virtue of our isolation, always thrown into immediate relation with an other-than-human-world. What we have natural world can remain exotic and other to us, it is also deeply familiar to our constitution.
“And so, began a year working with a team of people led by Utzon that changed the course of my life. I had only been there for two weeks before Jørn suggested I go to work in the boatshed at Palm Beach. It was a long room, with a big sliding glass door at the end, looking out over Pittwater; home territory for me. ...That was where Jørn loved to come and work. ...He had his own chair there, which none of us ever sat in. It was an Aalto. He would draw and describe the life in the building for us; a wonderful way to learn.”

Leplastrier 2012
Influences from Jørn Utzon

Jan Utzon
Since all of you have been doing freehand drawings, here is a story my mother told me when I was little when I was doing something and she said,

“A long time ago in China a very famous artist was asked to produce a drawing for the Emperor of a cock, and he said OK I will do this I need 3 years. Then after 3 years he came to the palace and he rolled out a large sheet of white paper. There was nothing on it and everybody in court was stiff because what’s happening? And he got out this box and in five minutes he had made the most perfect, beautiful cock you had ever seen and they asked, “How did you do that?” He said the first year I bought some hens and a cock and I just sat down and watched them. I saw how they moved how they sat and how they ate, how they fought. In the second year I drew the hens in all kinds of different positions and the third year I drew the cock in so many different positions so now I have the cock inside me. I could do it any way you like it”.

So when you think of this process doing freehand drawings I think it is important that you keep up your skill, as it were, because it gets better and better and immersing yourself in the skills that you have at all levels will of course improve what you can do.

Then we have, I just want to show...I don’t know who mentioned this. It’s a photograph of my father and his brothers and his father hunting deer (see fig. 1, p. 116). My father is the second from the right and his two brothers on the left and their father on the right. Hunting was a great part of my father’s youth because his father liked to go hunting in the Autumn, but my father never went by himself, so I have never seen him as a hunter – he has always been an architect to me. Just to recapitulate, that was the image that you saw of my father’s inspiration from seeing. He transformed his experience from what he seen into something else. He does have a connection to what he has seen but has produced something which is entirely different, and related to life nature and society in which it is placed.
The peak of his career, as you will, in the public mind was when he did the Opera House at Sydney (see fig. 2, p. 116). I was studying architecture at the time. When we went to Australia I was still attending school. I finished my high school in Australia and I commenced studying architecture in Australia. So that was about the time when the Opera House was going on and I visited the office very often and went around but I was never used as such because my father he relied on people who had finished their education, and he got the best people from all over the world who were keen to work on the Opera House. This of course made the Opera House office very interesting to be at because you had these people from Turkey, from Japan, from Austria from Norway from Denmark from Australia and so forth in a big group of people.

Among other things my father was in a role where people wanted him to come to cocktail parties, to give lectures and so on and he said “I can’t do this I am so busy doing the Opera House and solving all these problems. I can’t go to all these.” But he did make a chain for the architects institute which they are still wearing today on occasion (see fig. 3, p. 116).

Then there was this feud about the Opera House and many people thought it was an excessive luxury to build this building and they say this is somebody printed a ticket for the opening of the Opera House and, I can’t read it here, I think it says 96 but this is 66 and it was called the white elephant. It’s the white elephant (see fig. 5, p. 116). And when my father was rejected from the job by the new government there was big protests among young architects and students in Sydney and elsewhere and many of the architects worked for the government architect and they were told that if you joined the demonstrations you were out of a job.

So there was a big battle going on but it was interesting to see how heartfelt the movement to keep my father was (see fig. 4, p. 116).

They went back to Denmark, among other things. Through all this I
was of course involved in the sense that I saw what was happening. I saw how my father tried to invent new things and go new ways that people were not really prepared to follow. They had a certain set of rules and if you followed those everything was ok, if you stepped outside that framework you had problems all the time. Not technical problems but because of the communication with these people who thought that you should behave and do things in a certain way.

Rick showed this picture of a project in a cave (see below). This is one of the second or third or whatever projects I was participating in with my father. I am just leading up to how my influence was being prepared. The influence I received. There was a cave in Lebanon, outside Beirut, and you could only enter from the left through an opening which had the size of a normal entrance to a supermarket or something. So you could only bring building materials into the cave which you could actually carry. You had no way of taking a truck in there so we made a project that consisted of aluminium ladders. You

Proposal for cave in Beirut, Lebanon by Utzon
can see on the right hand side picture (see below, to the left). These aluminium ladders were light enough that two people could carry them and they would be assembled to a cage-like structure where the audience, about 300 people could sit and a small stage and the cave itself was the background, the backdrop for the performances and also when you had light inside the cage you were in a geometric envelope. You could put spotlights and acoustic panels on the cage and when you turn off the lights inside the cage and put on the lights inside the cave suddenly your universe expanded to the walls of the cave, which was very nice. Unfortunately there was a war in Lebanon, as you know so it came to nought.

My father designed some furniture (see below, to the right). He was starting to think very much in terms of how can we go from a hand-crafted world around us into a machine made world? How can we make that transition and still retain that human feeling of something being of human nature to us. And he said we could maybe make seating of pieces of rock like he had seen in Sweden
1. Proposal for factory in Portugal, 2. Petrol station, 3-6. Theater and Concert hall in Espía, Denmark
where you generally find a very nice rock wherever you are on the rocky coast and sit on that and have your picnic and he designed a series of furniture I have just shown you one. They could be like in an airport lounge for instance around tables and he said “It is interesting to see that we are all very much alike like you here you are sitting on a tables in straight rows against the back wall”. You sit on a bus in straight rows, you sit on an airplane in straight rows, you sit at school in straight rows but given the opportunity he found at the park in Paris where they have loose chairs you can see people take the chairs and arranged themselves in groups like this. So this underlying idea is that people will, if given the opportunity, arrange themselves other than in straight lines.

Within the factory, the Praktica factory in Portugal, unfortunately the manager died in a car crash so that came to nothing. But you can see some of the same attachment to the surrounding site like you have seen at Ait Benhaddou (see p. 120, fig. 1).

Then I was doing jobs where, like a petrol station in Denmark, where a simple geometry with the laminated beam a different length was spaced between them with glass between the beams made this roofs over the petrol pumps (see p. 120, fig. 2). Later on I was involved in a theatre and concert hall in Espia (see p. 120, fig. 3-6), a little provincial town in Denmark, where there is on the right is an existing museum from the 60s a main street going down to the town square and ending up at a foyer square in front of the music hall and the large foyer which is used like an indoor living room, for the city where they have car exhibitions, they have singing, they have art exhibitions and so on, and in that space which I made as small as possible is the stage tower and the auditorium and everything else is underground to minimise the footprint and the impact in this little path where everyone is sitting. And it is with sloping walls because we needed the space at the bottom to the width of the space at the bottom we didn’t need it at the top so I sloped the walls. And we used the same ceramic tiles as is used on the surface of the Sydney Opera House. Because of the slope, its eight degrees off the vertical
it catches the sky and the light of the clouds and the sun in not the same way of course, but in a similar way that you actually see the change in a way that you wouldn’t see if it was vertical. And you approach the building and the structure and the space you enter the actual auditorium through two doors and you see the principle of this is that the foyer space is here and you enter here and walk down in the auditorium and you have the stage and the stage tower. And the stage tower has a certain dimension because it had to take the plays directly from the royal theatre in Copenhagen so that gave the dimension for that. These are big floors that span the entire width of the place and they can be lowered so having a concert you have the ceiling up here and you have something hung from the ceiling of the stage tower to make a concert space. When you use it for theatre you lower the ceiling and cut off the balcony and you have a much smaller venue, which has the acoustics for speech. And this is just for performance you can see the floats in the ceiling.

And then I got involved in so called third world aid projects in Africa and I have been doing this since 1996 or so. I was designing a small school for some people in Denmark and somebody from Africa saw it and said “Could you do one for us?” We usually have these schools set in the countryside somewhere and out in the middle of nowhere (see p. 124, to the left), and this is in Zimbabwe and the tower is actually a water tower and I said could we make it a little bit bigger because then we can have some rooms on the way up to the water and on top of the water you have a nice view of the whole place and there is a conference hall at the back. There is the entrance (see p. 122) and it’s all made of concrete block, which they made on the spot. You are not allowed to... The money that goes into this comes from Finland “Finaid” I think it is called, and they don’t want you to use clay bricks because if you use clay bricks they way that they make the clay bricks they take the clay they make the clay bricks and they stack them in a big heap and cut down all the trees around to fire the kiln as it were to create the bricks and it destroys the forest So therefore, you think it would be great to use the soil and the clay. But in fact it is more environmentally friendly for the local area, in a way, to use the concrete blocks. And then
we have some tires from Huaganez to stick on as decoration (see below, to the right), but they worked in a way that they start on the building site and the people in the surrounding villages say we hear there is some work and they come to the gate and say “could we get some work?” They are given a shovel and if they can dig a hole they have got a job. And the guy who could show on a scale 137cm he was the foreman. So it was very simple and there was a great joy among the people working there.

And I sat, when it was only up to knee height I sat in the front area under a test roof with 4 columns with a piece of plywood as a table and some piece of paper and drew details trying to figure out if it went like this or like this or like this and they got these details and tried to interpret it and we went and tried to put the bits and pieces together so they could see how they could do it and I could learn from them what they could do and not do.

For instance some of the white paintings in the ceilings was really funny if you look up the ceiling is all off from white but there it
is really strange and it was because they were allowed to take the empty paint buckets home when they had used them and they saw a half empty bucket here and a half empty bucket there and this is white paint this is white paint but one was oil and the other was plastic paint and they mixed it so it was really strange. A lot of things like this happened. About 50% of the whole area is this shaded area so you can walk in the shade and the rest are offices and also accommodation for the students and for the teachers.

Here is another one, unfortunately it is a bit dark but they were for some workers from some other place where we made a small factory to create concrete slab elements that could be put between poles to make it easy to erect some nice little houses (see below, to the left). The community houses at the end where you have the kitchens you have where they sit and eat, are just a villa and the houses along the two sides and they cost only $75 a square metre. That kind of price.

This is an old tobacco factory, in the same region (see below, to the right), which we converted into a community centre. We put a roof

Left: Housing project, Right: Community Center
1. School project on hillside, 2-4. School project, 5. University i Mozambique, 6. ‘Farum City Centre’, Inspiration for Uni in Mozambique
on these old columns that were there and they invite the community every fourth Sunday about 4000 turn up to get food and have a great time with all their kids. They have entertainment they bring themselves and so on.

Another location is just also a school but different building it is a different terrain it is very hilly so the whole compound has been broken up into individual buildings (see p. 126, fig. 1). There are different levels. The columns are cast in concrete. We have taken a sewage pipe of PVC sliced it in half down the length. Tied it all together with a reinforcement inside put concrete in and taken the sewage pipe away afterwards so they are relatively slender columns. You have a conference room and work room inside.

And this is another one where it is actually, the school is placed on a plateau and the buildings are all around two courtyards (see p. 126, fig. 2-4). This is one of the courtyards. The zebras they enter and they enjoy rubbing themselves on the columns so they have to repaint them very often. From afar, a little bit of distance you have accommodation on the left hand side which you cannot see, on the right hand side you have meeting rooms, at the far end you have dining and kitchen and at this end you have a larger conference room and you can see the zebras again. They are curious to see what goes on inside this building.

In Mozambique I did a small University and it is actually in the middle of nowhere as you can see (see p. 126, fig. 5). That is the University down there and it is. To a certain degree or to a large degree actually influenced by a project I have been not very much part of but still I made the model for this centre that my father did for a competition in Denmark many years previously (see p. 126, fig. 6), and I thought making a University you cannot predict how big it is going to be. You know you have a programme of rooms and you have an area of maybe 15 square kilometres you could put it anywhere you want. It is an unusual kind of site and many of the sites I work at are at least two square kilometres and they are
usually in an area of 50 square kilometres with nothing else. So this one I said ok lets lets…we have all these units for teachers for the students where they live, we have some classrooms, we have an assembly room we have some more students accommodation and how can we tie it all together and it has to be cheap so I made this corridor that meanders through the terrain between the trees and bushes and so on, and its just an open corridor no walls (see below). The central area is fairly big its 10 metres wide and the columns are set at 8 metre intervals and it houses about 1000 students which gather from all around because they want to live there. They have smaller corridors all around that extend out and connect the other buildings but it’s a place where students walk. You can walk down here and under that canopy and sit and talk and so on because the plan is such that you do that.

The rear garden story is that now it has been planted so you have vegetation on both sides of different kinds so in a few years, actually almost now, you can walk through the corridors and you have green walls and sometimes you can go out through the green walls and
see the mountains beyond or the landscape and the way it comes through the greenery and it is cool that way. It is very simple the columns are just like, if you look at the plan of the columns it is just a ‘vee’ to make it stable in all directions. Many of the people who work there is come from other places in the world and among other things from the United States. The organisation had bought a piece of the university in Michigan and a small town called Dewalt and they said can you make some classrooms for this accommodation so I made some wood buildings with classrooms and assembly room. This is from the assembly room under construction and this they call it pre-school. You cannot send the brightest students from United States directly to Africa they have to have some sort of education to know how to behave, what to expect and actually do a good job when they get there.

In Denmark we did in 2001-3 a small visitor’s centre in the northern part of Denmark, which is the closest we can get to a desert in Denmark (see below). The Danish peninsula, up north towards
Norway it grows every year about eight metres where sand is added and that landscape is of interest, in an environmental sense. They decided to make this centre and asked us to produce it. My father and I we made a project for a museum in another place in Denmark earlier where because of the wind and the nature in Denmark in that particular place my father said shouldn’t we do an enclosed courtyard and put all the buildings in there that would keep the whole thing together and in these windy conditions it is nice to walk around these courtyards.

The project came to nothing and some years later we were asked to do this visitor centre in a similar nature in Denmark and we took this motive of enclosing the building for this visitor centre within a wall it is 40 metres 45 metres this way and it is 90 metres that way (see below, to the left). You have an entrance here and then you have a reception and then you have a restaurant on this part and 2 storey. Everything else is 1 storey buildings with laboratories, exhibitions of how nature works in that part of Denmark and of

*University in Mozambique, Outdoor corridors in the landscape*
course these courtyards are nice spaces between where they also have exhibitions. It is all made of concrete and brick but you see perhaps similarities without being the same but similarities with how we enter here through a gate in a big wall. You don’t know what’s beyond it, but once you are inside a completely different world opens there. Here is an opening that shows the lighthouse (see p. 130, to the right) that was interesting in itself but you have a connection to the outside from in there. Inside that area and these are, just photos from some of the exhibition rooms (see below, to the left), but it is a very orderly architecture if you look at it is has a certain order a certain geometry and you find that in most of my father’s works. Because of that, I have been brought up almost by osmosis I have continued that line of thought tried to give an order in the structure because it somehow feels right. I feel all that the great building I have been to, have some sort of order.

This does not have a particular order. This is actually a project for a business centre in Western Australia (see below, to the right). They
have something called the one square kilometre array, it is radial telescopes it has nothing to do with one square kilometre but those telescopes are to be spread all over Australia and New Zealand and act as one radial telescope to listen to all the emissions that you get from the universe and try to find abnormalities in the hope of finding life elsewhere.

This was an exhibition building for a furniture factory in Shanghai (see below, to the left). This is the exhibition building next door over here are the offices which are similar but 2 storeys and the factory is just behind me as the photographer. Big thing.

And finally I have done this convention centre in Mexico a very empty space (see below, to the right). The site is 1 km deep, 4 km long and the building itself is about 700 metres in length. It is a convention centre. If you imagine the normal convention centre you usually have a building. You have two or three floors with a reception, restaurant, meeting rooms and so on and you have a hotel above it because it’s a constrained site, you are in a city somewhere.
But here, I mean, there is so much space so going back to the influence I had by my father, I said ok we will break this up. We will make every space in this convention centre its own little building (see below, to the left). It has a size and a form that’s suitable for that particular thing. We put them on plateau in front of the foothills and then connected all the corridors and the Mexican traditional way of cladding church roofs and so on was with tiles. We used that motif to clad to roofs with tiles so you see this is the main entrance you come down here and the corridors through all the blue roofed little corridors connect all the other buildings.

The convention or meeting space just for size this one is 40 metres long, 25 metres wide and 20 metres high and the columns are set at 3 metre intervals. There are actually two people standing there. It is all clad with travertine, the entire surface thanks to our good friend Louis Kahn at the Salk institute. These are the workers (see below, to the right). There were at one stage 600 workers there and it was a great place to work. It took about 5 years. So you have these
different courtyards but still you have the feeling of being on a large camp in the middle of the desert but every space is slightly different from the other and to the right you have the Pacific Ocean out here.

My sister she was invited to come up with the ideas this is one of the openings, large windows and the first one is about so high.

This is a curious object because in the project I made a water tower (see below, to the left). These projects are always somewhere where you have to provide your own water and your own electricity so I made a water tower and in the end we found out it was much smarter to make a big water tank up in the hills because we can make it huge so there is a good supply of water and I took the tower away. They said oh no we like that motif in the building could we keep it. I was hesitant about that, but I reduced it in size and then I folded it and it became like if you see it in plan its just a cross but it is like the lady on the front of the bonnet of a Rolls Royce; completely useless.

Left: Convention Centre Landmark, Right: Water tables
And this is just some little water tables (see p. 134, to the right) you see from the office it’s across water, across corridors across the space and through the next corridor you see the city in the distance.

And this is the large convention space (see below). You see, we talked about boats and the structure has always been a thing my father looked for in his buildings as to include in the architecture. So he says the structure, if you have a feeling of the structure in architecture it gives your soul rest because then you know you have these columns, you have these beams you have this framework. It all hangs together like an inverted boat and it is sensible or logical in a way even though it is an unusual shape if you will. Between these we braced the underside with insulation material with mineral wool and put slats you cannot see them in this photo but slats of wood so it is a very good acoustic even though it has a terrazzo floor.

And that is one of the other meeting rooms. You can see the ocean beyond, and little huts and the three metre distance between

Convension Centre, Large Convension space
columns. Between those meeting rooms there is an amphitheatre space with steps going down three sides and the back so the person can stand with their back to the ocean and talk to all the participants like if we were here. And that’s it.

It was just to show you that living with my father’s architecture and living with seeing or hearing him talk about the things that he liked, you slowly saw this so when you do things yourself you cannot help yourself but going to some degree that way even though its different. There are many elements and spaces you have seen that clearly belongs to my fathers way of thinking.

He was very much supported by my mother. Of course you hear about him but don’t hear about her. Because she took all his letters and all his tax problems and all the hassle of having children and food and so on, he could actually explore fully his own abilities to create. She was quite a good draughtsman herself she was educated as a commercial artist. She made beautiful drawings but that was put aside when they had children. She always drew later in life birds and figures and so on she could go on the bus and when she got home she could draw all the passengers on the bus she could see their hands and so on.

So you could say that they represented a unity that made it possible to have this output that my father had and also an output that he has had through myself, my sister and my brother, who is also an architect. So that’s it continues. Thank you.

QUESTIONS AFTER THE PRESENTATION

Guest: What about life in your childhood growing up in the forest? I mean that’s a very different situation from what it is in Denmark generally.

JU: Yes. Well I was looking back actually generally thinking we had
a very loose set of rules. I could do pretty much what I liked and told my parents I had been up in the tallest tree and jumped from this tree to the other tree and they said good, good. If they were worried they didn’t show it and I remember when I saw seven my father taught me how to sail in an old dinghy and I was allowed to sail in front of my grandmothers house on the coast from here to there and of course I went down the coast and I got some scalding but just verbally. So in that sense I was very free and was allowed to experience a lot of things. When I was about15 I found all my curiosity for things and going to what how does this work how does that work. He went to the airport for me and he got from the what do you call it…the warehouse where they have all the airplane parts and this was at the time when air traffic was going from propeller aircraft to jet aircrafts, so they had a lot of stuff that was not going to be used any more. He got a whole truck, well a whole station wagon for of airplane parts and I got that for Christmas. It was a wonderful thing to have for Christmas.

Two years later my friends at school all started to ride motorbikes. My mother’s father was a surgeon. He said never allow your children to ride motorbikes, it’s far too dangerous.. I know because I operate on all these casualties. And my father said he saw a small ad in the days paper about the air force selling some airplanes that were going to be scrapped so he bought an entire plane and we had it transported to the site where my parents house was and we had an entire plane from the second world war to play with.

AC: It didn’t fly though?

JU: It didn’t fly, no. And 20 years later the airplane museum in Denmark said “Could we have that plane please because it’s the last one in Denmark” When they got it, it was pretty battered but still it was intact actually they inflated the tyres and rolled it out…after all those years amazing! And they fixed it…it is flying today. But I was given a free pass to go to the local ship yard so I could go around making drawings, like you have done now, of the different processes
of how to turn big crank shafts out of steel and how to cast this and how to do this and because my father he encouraged us to know so many different processes as possible. He transferred his enthusiasm to the architects working with him. It wasn’t something… he wasn’t a teacher going around saying you should go around and do so and so and so and so he just talked about what he had seen and what he liked. I remember once I said “You talk about Frank Lloyd Wright, you talk about Corbusier you talk about Aalto, Asplund and others why don’t you talk about this and that and so on?” And he said “Well they don’t interest me” but he never criticised anybody he just talked about the things that he liked.

AC: You are working with these aid organisations do you think that social commitment came from you father? An interest in working with these kind of projects?

JU: No…I think…not.

AC: There is a social dimension in his work as well.

JU: Oh yes absolutely. Like I say that I have worked as an architect with employees of architects. I have an office with eight to ten people and the normal office where you have a client and they call you and you have meetings back and forth and nothing seems to be going right and you have to make compromised. Then I got these clients in third world countries and when I make the drawings I make the preliminary project in Denmark or wherever I happen to be and I send the drawings. They say “Please come down we have started building it”. I come down and look at it and say…”Could you move this over here?...Could you do this?” and they say “No problem” and they are going up as fast as I can do them because they are so needed whereas in Denmark and similar countries we have everything.

I remember a Vietnamese delegation coming, I had a project in Vietnam at one stage, and the Vietnamese delegation come to
Denmark and we showed them around around and when we were at the airport we asked “What’s your impression?” and they said, “Well you have everything, there is nothing more to do.” This is true in their sense because in Ho Chi Minh City where it was, they said in the next six years we are going to increase the size of the city by 5 million people. Can you imagine 5 million people? That’s the entire population of Denmark. You had to build schools, dwellings, shops, town halls, everything. So working in those kind of countries can be very exciting because you really feel needed. And in Africa and many other places the people are very gentle, they seem very grateful. Not that I want them to be grateful but the feeling that you are doing something that does something good is of course tremendous. It’s tremendously gratifying.

**Guest:** What about this osmosis with you father. Reflecting back on your career as an architect there must have been a discussion of how much influence is yourself and how much competition you have worked with your father?

**JU:** My wife’s Grandfather said “Don’t worry about competition because there is always somebody better than you.” Meaning that you should work with yourself and do the things you do as well as you can do them. That’s all you can do. Therefore there was never any… I didn’t have a feeling of competing with my father at all. I worked with him…perhaps some of the ease with which this has been going on, was due to the fact that he was in Hawaii I was in Denmark while we worked together. We were not sitting next to each other. But of course many time we have worked together and I have worked with other architects. I worked in Hawaii, I worked in Denmark, I worked other places but I always returned to work with my father because I felt that his trains of thought, they way he achieved or reached a solution was so much more in harmony with my own which of course is the same.

I have been brought up this way. I can’t tell you exactly this is him, but of course many of the projects I have done are due to the projects
I have seen him doing and the way he was thinking. Those schools that I do in Africa are teacher training colleges. Instead of just having a building with an entrance with all the rooms inside I say ok we have a situation here where we must make a building that is modest but also can we at the same cost, can we make it a pleasant place to be? Could it be nice? Can we use the land around us? So I break it down into little buildings so the classrooms have their own little building the accommodation have a building or buildings which can be arranged around courtyards or gardens. So I draw it in the nature where I can build around trees and so on.

I remember in one instance when I sent the drawings, it was one of the projects in Angola, and the site was on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Atlantic coast . And they had actually set out the buildings and I got a photo of it and they had turned instead of using the bits and pieces and arranged them around the trees they had turned the whole thing around so all the toilets were facing the ocean and the local governor said you don’t want all these ugly trees so they cut the trees down. So somebody was hopeless. They had these beautiful 1500 years old Baba trees the trunk wouldn’t have fit in here. They cut them down so from then on I was there all the time saying ok put this over here do this do that. They realised that they couldn’t do it the other way, so it has given me a very hands-on role in these projects at the same time they wanted so many schools that I couldn’t be there for every one throughout the entire building phase. So many of the projects have been like a music score. Written music, I give it to an orchestra and they play it, more or less, the way I have designed it. Sometimes I get given some surprises, sometimes they are good, sometimes they are not so good.

I had a recent where the EU was involved and they had a Belgian company do some buildings. The whole roof blew off in a storm because they under-dimensioned everything so critically so they couldn’t work. So they just surrendered and redo it in the proper way so its not a big deal. So I usually say in Denmark when you have a client, after the building is completed they look up and see
a crack in the ceiling and they call the lawyer and we are sued for not doing a proper job. In those countries when the roof leaks and the water drips down they just move the chair...(laughter) and they still smile.

So it is a different approach, and of course the fee is low but I am given a great freedom in the sense that I can work anywhere. I could sit here now and I could work because everything goes by email or my presence there. And I don’t have any staff...that’s not quite true because in the case of that factory in China, my drawings were given to a Chinese company in order to comply with the local rules and they then do the working drawings and actually are in charge of the building of the place and that was a small architects office. A Beijing office of architects.

And in Australia when my father was asked to come back to help develop ideas for the future of the Opera House in Sydney he immediately said “I don’t want to go there but if you can accept my son Jan who worked with me for 40 years as my personal representative in Australia I would be happy to take this job”. They reluctantly said yes, they didn’t know anything of me of course but over the years we have had, this was in 1999 over the years we have had a good sort of personal development so they are quite happy that I am there even though my father has passed away. So in that sense you could say I continue, not where he left off, but in his spirit as it were. It can never be the same, as I said yesterday. We are feelers absorbing a lot of things and something comes out of us which, even though it is inspired by something, it has a little bit of our own personality in it. That’s how things change along the way.
Influences from Jørn Utzon
I was, 23, 24 maybe, and I walked down to the office of the Opera House. I had an interview to see if I could work in Utzon’s office. It was an old white prefab shed right next to the sandstone seawall with the Opera House rising to the west of it. I walked up to the door, knocked, and this very tall fellow came out. He looked like he had just stepped out of Ingmar Bergman’s The Seventh Seal. It was Mogens Prip-Buus, he was Jørn’s offside. He looked down at me and said “oh yes?” “I’m Richard, I’ve come for an interview,” and he said, “oh it’s alright, you have the job.” I said, “what about my interview?” He said, “don’t you worry you come next Monday and you can start.”

And so, began a year working with a team of people led by Utzon that changed the course of my life. I had only been there for two weeks before Jørn suggested I go to work in the boatshed at Palm Beach. It was a long room, with a big sliding glass door at the end, looking out over Pittwater; home territory for me. There were long flat drawing tables and only two or three of us in there. That was where Jørn loved to come and work. He didn’t like to go to the city so much, he always had on his wonderful suit when he went up there, but you could feel that somehow or other, he preferred to be down in the boat shed, not the city. He had his own chair there, which none of us ever sat in. It was an Aalto. He would draw and describe the life in the building for us; a wonderful way to learn.

Can I tell you some stories about this time and we can have some pictures later. I remember one time we were just sitting in there quietly working with Jon Lundberg from Norway as our senior. Nice man. We could see some people walking down the side of the shed. They were obviously from the newspaper and Jørn was always a bit nervous about the press. He was out the back door very quickly and disappeared. They came in the front door and asked for Mr Utzon. Jon Lundberg said that he wasn’t there. “Are you sure?” “Are you sure he is not here?” They were looking under the tables. “No, no, no, he’s not here.” Jon Lundberg was hospitable and explained the scheme in Zurich, a competition for a concert hall recently won by
Utzon. They finally left, still looking under the tables. An hour or so later after they left we wondered where Jørn was, as he hadn’t come back. I went down the beachfront looking. Close by was a house for sale, big sign up. On the veranda was a big banana chair to sit in and in the big banana chair was Jørn with sunglasses on, reading the newspaper incognito, in disguise. He loved to play like that with things.

Utzon loved to sail and out the front of the shed he had a sailing boat, a very beautiful Yachting World keelboat. Sometimes he would come down on a nice day and if I were there by myself he might say, “The sun’s shining today, it’s too good to be working inside, let’s go out in the boat.” So I’d drag the dinghy down the shore, put the sails in, and he would come out saying, “Oh Ricardo, I’m terribly sorry we can’t sail today, I remembered, I have a meeting in the city.” My face would drop and he would say, “only joking let’s go.” We’d go out around Barrenjoey Headland into the open sea - he would just love to be on the boat. I remember one time we were coming back in around Barrenjoey, the wind was dropping with the heat of the sun going down. He was standing aft of the tiller, me steering, just hanging onto the back stay. A sea bird came up over the sand dunes across the still water towards us, heading west into the hills where it was going to rest the night. Jørn watched it right the way across and said very quietly, “If I were the seabird that’s exactly where I would be going as well.” He was right there with everything that was happening and taught me that I was looking, but not seeing.

Another time he pointed out a feathery cloud lifting up over Lion Island. It was a beautiful shape. I hadn’t even noticed it. Another time I remember the two of us were just sitting down on the edge of the sea wall by the beach, having a cup of tea. He looked across to the other side of Pittwater where there are communities living and said, “you know, if you were interested, in say maybe making a big bridge that crossed over with great ease and beauty, you would want to be an engineer, but if you want to make a terrace over there, where the parents can sit quietly, with a cup of tea and watch their children playing on the sand in perfect safety in the sunshine,
then you want to be an architect.” His humanity was his work’s foundation.

Quite often, in the office he would say something like “ah, that it such a beautiful idea.” Not such a popular word in architecture today. But somehow one always thinks about it. You think maybe of the Grundtvig Church that Jan showed us earlier. When you enter the Grundtvig Church you come in under the organ, and the organ has its own timber structure. So the organ of that church is the gatehouse and you enter that building through a wall of music. That is a beautiful idea.

In Japan there is The Grand Shrine of Ise. They have rebuilt this building for 2000 years every twenty years. They rebuild this building on a clear site in the forest of white gravel and next to it is the twin site, and one is empty and one has the building, but when you look at the building, you realise that what it represents is the primitive clearing of the forest, the taking of the timbers, the placing of the timbers for the columns and the placing of the timbers for the roof. So it is like an archetypal symbol if you like of the habitation that we as a human society have gone through for such a long time. Not only that, every craft from the timber work, to the making of the bronze mirror, to the weaving of the sacred cloth, to the beating and the making of the sword, is done by master craftsmen every 20 years. This guarantees that the best standard and quality is maintained and it has been so for 2000 years. Isn’t that sustainability? A word that has been turned into quantities and figures and carbon footprints and all of these things and of course they are important for us, and they are important for the planet, but as architects if we don’t have underlying what we are doing, a beautiful idea about life, whether it is for the Houses of Parliament where the laws are made, or whether it is for the courthouses where the laws are interpreted, or whether it is for the hospital which is a place of well-becoming, or the Opera House or the churches or whatever it is, if there is not a beautiful idea that underpins it as a foundation then it is only building and not architecture. Utzon taught us about that.
This is the town of Ping-Yao, China (see below, to the left). It is the beginning or the end of the great Silk Route where the caravans went across to and from Europe. These are the houses of the merchants who set up the whole economic structure of the Silk Route. They were the people, the merchants of Ping-Yao who made the first letters of credit so that the caravans which had previously carried gold and silver weren’t getting robbed on the way across. They had Chinese letters of credit. Tell me, what’s different today. And, this is the town where that happened. The Old Quarter is almost intact; with its immense battlemented earth wall several metres thick and fifteen metres high, and beautiful court-yard houses within.

But even more interesting is this building across the middle of that main street (see below, to the right). Here the elders of the city met and discussed the issues that controlled the town. It is right on the axis of the main street and it has this overview in all directions, that’s a beautiful idea.

The Buddist temple of Ellora, India, is cut into the mountainside,

*Ping-Yao, China, ‘The Silk Route’*
on three levels (see below, to the left). This lower level represents Buddha’s early time. He was errant and this darker deeper level represents that period. The view out to the plain from this level is restricted by the narrow width of the entrance. Each of the three levels has a Buddha statue in gold leaf at the deepest end. The gold leaf picks up the available light. The second floor up is closer to the light; its opening looking over the plains is wider. It represents Buddha’s time of meditation. The third level at the top has a broad view out and represents Buddha’s final time of enlightenment. Just like Jan’s lovely examples of the pyramids coming up above the tree line in Yucatán; that is a beautiful idea.

This is Borobudur in Java (see below, to the right). It is the reverse of Ellora. This is built up, Ellora was cut out. But it is the same idea, that of ascension towards understanding. It’s stone and on a series of levels with restricted outlook from the lower levels until you get to the top and then you see across the tree line. This is the plan. You walk around these galleries and all the life of Buddha is illustrated for you; it’s a sculptured testament to his life. A beautiful idea.
This is the temple at Dendera, Egypt (see below, to the left). This is the only temple in Egypt that still has the roof. Most of Egypt’s temples have only the columns and walls remaining. As you ascend to the roof you realise that the whole cosmos of the stars in the sky were fundamental to their beliefs and their understanding of the. There are a series of slots in this roof, and when you go underneath to the ground floor of the temple you find a series of cell-like rooms that surround the main shrine hall. These cells are maybe 3 meters by 4 meters and are roofed over, by enormous blocks of stone, 1.2m deep, 1.5m wide and 3 and 4 meters long. Where the 2 stones that roof the room butt together there is a slot cut out, see section, and the brilliant sharp light of Egypt comes. It is a camera obscura and you watch the sky of Egypt pass across the floor of the room. Clouds, movement, everything, you see it. And some say that they made their floors of beaten silver. That’s a beautiful idea.

Jørn’s wonderful project for the caves of Jeita outside of Beirut (see below, to the right), and Jan, correct me if I’m wrong, but inside
is darkness and this structure for this theatre is made in steel, a carcass-like cage. It is lit in three different colours, red, yellow and grey. When you come in to this theatre it glows like the embers of a fire. When you are leaving, you turn around and there it is like a glowing coal in the darkness. A beautiful idea.

It leads on in a way to a preoccupation that Jørn had, and that I’ve certainly carried with me, about the nature of having one beautiful form nesting inside an outer form. The Opera House had the theatres free inside the shells. The caves in Beirut have the theatre again free inside. There are some other wonderful examples of this, which I would like to share with you.

Japan, the White Heron Castle of Himeji; where I took our youngest son, Ek, last year. We arrived there and we found this (see below) – the castle under re-construction. A shroud or screen covered the entire building. It’s cherry blossom time, early April. Here is a culture, that’s been seriously hurt by the Tsunami and most particularly the

The White Castle of Himeji, Japan
nuclear reactors at Fukushima. But the cherry blossom is out and they are celebrating rebirth - drinking and happy and able to forget so much of the pain of last year. But look what they have done, when they work on a building like this. They build another building over the top of it completely, so they can work all the year round to make the changes and the weather is not a problem. But they have also drawn on the outside of the shroud, the building itself, absolutely to scale so they haven’t quite lost it from the axis of the city street. And here’s the section; it’s a beautiful idea just in itself (see p. 151, to the right). But when you go inside between the shroud and the castle, you go up to the top, and you can touch the tiles on the roof, like the Opera House (see p. 153-154). You can go right next to where they are working, on all the openings in these plaster walls which are all indented against fire. In many ways I preferred it like this than the actual building itself.

In 1927, the Norwegian naval architect Johan Anker designed for King Harald this 8 metre class yacht. It is being replicated in an old tin shed on the Huon River in Tasmania (see below) with all the

Replication of yacht for King Harald by Johan Anker
sheets of tin flapping in the strong wind down there. You open the
door and inside is this exquisite boat. 2 blokes only, working on
it for 3 years, quietly working away. I said to one of them when I
came in, “excuse me mate is the boss around here?” He put down
his plane and he looked at me and said, “aint no bosses around
here.” Embedded knowledge, which you take in over a lifetime,
somehow belongs in us and comes out without thinking. Like a jazz
musician who is so well trained that the music becomes, it is not
made. Simply, it’s about training ourselves. It was one of Utzon’s
greatest strengths.

Greenwich, England, the Cutty Sark, is being rebuilt. Look at the
shed that it is in (see below, to the left); made of steel sticks and
translucent skin, like a chrysalis. Lovett’s, (Bay) where we live,
with a new workshop that we have just made and in it sits the boat.
Seven coats of varnish, one more to go.

But there it is again, Denmark, Germany, I’m bringing boats in, not
only because they played a great part in Jørn’s life and his family’s,
but also in mine. It was something I think that we really had in common. This is an ancient boat, hundreds of years old, but is so modern in it’s construction and shape (see p. 155, to the right). I think the handles are for turning it over and carrying it, but I’m not sure.

This man, Dr. Manfred Curry, was a great inspiration to me (see p. 156, fig. 1). He was 16 years of age, German, and a student at Göttingen University, when he wrote this most sophisticated book on the aerodynamics of sails and racing tactics. Check him out; hair brushed back, no windage. Woollen sweater, wool against the skin is always the best. Free armpits, when he sailed in light weather, he could feel every bit of breeze, in this sensitive part of the body. Not one watch, but two, a stopwatch down here on the string, a wrist watch to check that everything was in order. A pair of trousers, that doesn’t grab you around the tackle, so you can relax and make good tactical decisions. This bloke is absolutely together. What was even more interesting about him was the way he actually worked. He’s like Jørn, in that he took his lessons from nature, he was into hydrodynamics and aero foils. That piece of ice flow is the perfect shape for an underwater body (see p. 156, fig. 2-3).

These are the boats that he made, back in the 1920’s, exquisite and fast (see p. 156 fig. 4-5). A very modest man, saying in the forward to his book, “in spite of the experience gained in 327 regattas of which I won 326, I feel that my racing tactics and my aerodynamics cannot be improved upon.” But he was our Bible. He was Benny Lexan’s bible too, the man who designed the 12-meter that knocked off the Americans in The America’s Cup. So, he is an interesting man, and it’s this connection to nature and the lessons that we can take from it. These are also the lessons that came across to us from Utzon. This is Manfred Curry’s own glider (see p. 156, fig. 6). This is sailing technology in our country; minimal, lightweight, strong and fast.

Marrakesh has wonderful walls. Sometimes the beauty of the wall is shown up by the lightness of the bird that might land on it, like these storks and their beautiful nests. So, it is always somehow a
balance in life that gives frisson; like between an oboe and violin perhaps or the like lightness and darkness in this corridor outside here that works so beautifully. All these things are important to us as architects. And of course, the Oseberg ship, possibly the most beautiful thing ever made in terms of Naval Architecture (see below, to the left). Jørn’s father, Aage, was a great Naval architect. I’ve seen his boats. They are actually quite radical for their time. I’ve seen two yachts of his that had masts with no spreaders. To do that, you have to know exactly where to put the wires. This required great knowledge. He knew many things. Jan could give a whole talk about him and this room (see below, to the right). There is something about the order here with the ships curves, with the scale rules, with Utzon’s fantastic Opera House model, with the half models of his Spidsgatters (see p. 159, to the left). I suspect that through his understanding of hunting and natural events in the snow and in sailing he imparted this knowledge to his children and I suspect to Jørn in particular. I think it gave to Jørn what I would only describe as a hunter’s mind. I think that the architect has to have the hunter’s mind.

Left: Oseberg Ship, Right: Aage Utzon by his workdesk
Let me just read to you, from Barry Lopez, a great scientist and a great poet, I think, who writes about the Arctic. Arctic Dreams is the name of the book and he’s talking about the mind of the hunters of the Eskimos and the Inuit people he says, “This mind we know in dreaming, a non-rational, non-linear comprehension of events in which steps in time and space are normal, is the conscious working mind of the aboriginal hunter.” That’s the mind Jørn had. He was stimulating to be with because he saw everything that was going on. When he had meetings with politicians, I think that he really unnerved them, because he could just see straight through them. I think that made difficulties for him. If you go to Japanese culture, Basho the great poet, said if we want to enter into things, we must train our whole mind and whole body to be like a bell so that when the cherry blossom falls, the poem becomes. He said, becomes, he didn’t say is made, he said becomes, and I think that is the whole thing about embedded knowledge. So this boat of Utzon’s is nigh perfect because of this inner knowledge. Utzon was brought up with this understanding of complex forms for boats. They were cut
1. Headland of Barrenjoey, 2.-5: Sydney Opera House Concert Hall interior from observation of reflection of light, 6. Furniture inspired from cave
into sections in order to be made (see p. 159, to the right). It set the whole framework and foundation for him. It gave him the ability to solve the complex problems at the Opera House.

Let me give you a couple of examples how nature was able to inform him in pursuit of a solution. We’re all driven by the phenomenon of nature and flashes are about moments in time. I think, Jørn said at some stage, that happiness is only measured in seconds. But when he was working on the theatres in the Opera House, he went through five or six beautiful solutions, but none of them were quite right. And he told me this himself that one day he was walking on top of this great headland called Barrenjoey in the winter time. The sun was low and he looked out there and he saw the silver water (see p. 160, fig. 1). He thought if the sun as a single element can hit a facetted surface and come to him as a broad spectrum of light, why can’t the sun be the voice and why can’t the facetted surface be the theatre and my eyes are the ears of the audience? So he transposed it as in this drawing (see p. 160, fig. 2-3); a beautiful idea, a beautiful solution, and almost perfect acoustics. But three years, four years, of striving to find the solution, even a great mind like his, did not come up with it straight away. It was then to be made out of pieces like a boat would be made (see p. 160, fig. 4). They would be painted up the river where they were made, and brought down to the opera house on a barge, multi-coloured. Can you imagine how wonderful that would be, just like in Egypt (see p. 160, fig. 5).

I had the great privilege of doing drawings for Utzon’s house when I first went to work in the office. The first thing that he gave me to do was to make a model of the building. He had the little roof elements all made so I just had to drop them across walls which I cut very carefully and mitered all the corners and assembled it so you could barely see the joints. Back at the office I gave it to him and he looked askance “Oh Ricardo, you mitered all the corners.” I said, “yes, not a bad job.” He said, “you never mitre the corners, you can never take a material to infinity, particularly timber.”

But drawing the house with him, or rather he drawing the house and I’m drawing it after him, he would say something like “inside
1. ‘Utsep’ inspired by cave formation, 2-3. Sketches by Lloyd Rees, 4-6. Staircase in China reduced to its bare essentials
this great room we are going to have a beautiful piece of furniture. It’s going to have the seating like this and the shelves come over the top, so it’s like a room unto itself within the main room. This image is what I remember him drawing for me (see p. 160, fig. 6). It is based on this remarkable cave where we went for our Christmas lunches. It was very beautiful and it had these different levels (see p. 162-165). From this cave came this set of furniture (see p. 164, fig. 1). In the office there was a man called Jacob. He was a furniture maker as well as many other things. Jørn went to Japan and left Jacob with the ideas for this furniture. Jacob was to have the drawings and models made when he came back. Jacob didn’t do much for two and a half or three weeks. He was a very quiet, shy character in his own way, a lovely man. We were getting worried for him. Suddenly there was a flurry of activity in his corner and in two days the drawings appeared, went to the pattern maker who made the models and it was all there and finished when Jørn returned. When congratulating Jacob for doing so well he replied that in Denmark we always work harder when the toilet seat is on fire.

So the whole of issue of travel and drawing for me came from Jørn. If you want to learn about architecture you must draw every good place that you find, and see what it is that gives it that feeling. I always carry with me a sketchbook. I just want to take you through some of these drawings from my notebook. The sketchbook and the ability to draw, is our most powerful tool. My old drawing teacher, Lloyd Rees; five years with this man, one full day a week, one of the greatest landscape painter our country has ever had. These drawings was done in his 87th year (see p. 164, fig 2-3).

The qualities of culture and custom and garb and how they work, and how manners and clothing go together, is a wonderful thing. To emphasise quality through distortion, Picasso said to lie like hell in your drawings, as long as you tell the truth.

This is a staircase in China (see p. 164, fig. 4-6). It steps up a ridgeline continuously for thousands of feet. You draw it once, and then draw
1. Harbour for people, 2. Cliff side, 3.-6. Analysing architecture - The Sketchbook sees it, analyses it, and puts it aside so you remember
it a second time, reducing it to bare essentials. That most important part of a drawing is most often what it leaves out.

This image is to do with the nature of house as harbour. It is a fisher people’s harbour in Japan. The good home is a harbour for people (see p. 166, fig. 1).

The Aboriginal Australians lived in a whole landscape. This is Nourlangie, an under cliff inhabitation, hundreds of feet high (see p. 166, fig. 2). There is a small figure there at the base. The walls are covered in the paintings of the hunt. As the climate changed through the year they moved around it.

West Africa and its earth walls; in a small A5 sheet you can put a lot of information (see p. 166, fig 3). The whole building can be there. Earth walls, a beautiful roof that fits it, restricted opening for the light, water is caught in the courtyard. This is how it works as a whole village. Section, plans, dimensions.

Another wonderful building in southern Nigeria: A series of courtyards, earth walls and a roof that flies clear above the walls (see p. 166, fig. 4).

This is a section through the town of Fez (see p. 166, fig. 5). Here is the street, here it shows narrow cool shaded streets and courtyards with water within the houses.

This is a Pigeon house in Iran (see p. 166, fig. 6). I remember walking with Jørn across the landscape at Bay View where his house was going to be, and him saying that if you ever want to make a building that has a fractured quality of light inside you could make it like a pineapple with little tiny sections that pick up the light from above. I found it inside this building in Iran.

This is a very simple African hut (see p. 168). The columns are tree saplings upside down so you get the fatness at the top where you
make the joint with your plate. The top plate is circular following the plan and is branches bound together. The earth wall, that doesn’t support the roof at all. The light bounces in, little bits of twig to stop the birds flying in above the wall. There is a chair and a place for your feet. Sketchbook sees it, analyses it, and puts it aside so you remember.

The following are two buildings which are influenced by Jørn and by travel. They are many years apart and both involve earth walls. This is my first office (see below, to the right). On the site where I felt the building ought to go. Drawing board all set up; all the sketch drawings for the job were done there in the first week. Models were made and the cow came over and ate the models.

But, to be in the place, to see how it works, is so important. We build everything in models, small scale at first then big scale, 1:20. Every piece of timber in the building is in there. You can give the model to the builder if you know him well and he takes it from there (see below, to the right).

Left: The office of Richard Leplastrier, Right: Scale model
1-3. Earthern Architecture, House in ancient palm grove, 4-6. Earthern Architecture, Modern house
This is a model of a house in the wildest part of Tasmania. It was prefabricated in Sydney and transported to the site and assembled.

This house was made over 30 years ago in an ancient palm grove behind a beach with powerful headlands (see p. 170, fig. 1-3). The plan-form has a surrounding wall that is like the protecting hills behind. Off that wall are two very simple rooms connected by a lovely. The services are along the back of the gallery. This cross-section springs from the earth wall. I have since learnt much about these earth walls in Africa. Pisé or rammed earth, made exactly the same way as many of the great walls here in Morocco. It is a beautiful material, soaks up the sound, and doesn’t bounce it back like hard surfaces do. And it can go back in to the earth afterwards. Here then is a plan and a perspective of how it actually works. In the larger room the roof opens so the ceiling is the canopy of palms and the sky. The minor room is a more closed room, more secure, with framed views of the garden. The heart of this tiny house is the garden, and the house dissolves like a mirage around it. The wall in earth is heavy; the roof supporting structure is as light as possible in steel.

This is another house, done, nearly 30 years later. It also has an earth wall, but this earth wall is free, isolated, and in the centre of the building. It takes the radiant sun’s heat through controllable skylights (see p. 170, fig. 3-6). The wall gets warm and holds the heat. The building is tempered beautifully climatically, a very simple house.

With its earth wall, timber structure, all being recyclable. It is fully dismantle able, recyclable. The sun can enter above the wall and penetrate light through to the south rooms. No doors and frames interrupt the clarity of the earth wall. Closure against it is by carpets on pivoting frames.

These are two drawings from Jørn’s sketches of the house in Bayview (see p. 172). He worked on that for nearly 5 years. I was the last of the line of architects that worked on this place. These are
some of the early drawings. Here he’s thinking of the house and the system, but here on the right-hand side he’s thinking about China or Japan and the great floating roofs and the platform underneath. It’s lovely to see that. He just depended on things from other cultures incredibly, and translated them and transcended them. But what really interested me was this corner, here, where his mind, the mind that we know in dreaming, the non-linear, non-rational mind, about which I read to you earlier is operating here. Here are the two wonderful occupants of this house, both with musical instruments playing the music of love. You can see the platform of the house and the opening wall. He’s thinking about how the life goes on within it.

So, all these works of architecture come about through order as Jan described so beautifully, and from the order and discipline comes

*Sketches of Bayview House*
relaxation and freedom, the deliberate act, `de-liberate’ to bring to order. This is on the wall of my boat builder mate, Stumpy’s workshop (see below).

I just want to finish off with a quote from an Indian philosopher called Nagarjuna. He says “here then is a beautiful equation, ritual is the perfect performance of one’s task or conversely the perfect performance of one’s task is the celebration of ritual.” To finish, I would like to say to you Jan publicly, and to your family and to your father and your mother and to your sister, Lin and your brother Kim, firstly how much I personally I owe to you for my foundations and also for what in fact you have given to all of us. Thank you very much.

Sign above boat workshop, words to rember

THE PAIN OF DISCIPLINE
IS NOTHING LIKE THE
PAIN OF DISAPPOINTMENT!!
“At a time when architecture tends to drift away from its mythical and existential task, the ontological echo of its origins, it is important to survey the mythical origins of architecture, and its human essence.”

Pallasmaa 2012
MAKING THE WORLD: SPACE, PLACE AND TIME IN ARCHITECTURE

chapter 07

Placelessness and nostalgia
in the age of mobility

Juhani Pallasmaa
“In the fusion of place and soul, the soul is as much of a container of place as place is a container of soul, and both are susceptible to the same forces of destruction”.

(Harrison 2008, p. 130)

“[T]he more one travels, the more complex one’s sense of nostalgia becomes.”

(Brodsky 1997, p. 35)

THE MENTAL TASK OF ARCHITECTURE

At a time when architecture tends to drift away from its mythical and existential task, the ontological echo of its origins, it is important to survey the mythical origins of architecture, and its human essence. The primary task of architecture is to create the experience of placeness, that is, to define man’s location and domicile in relation to the homogenous, placeless and meaningless ‘natural’ space that extends to infinity. The experience of placeness implies the perception of the place as a distinct gestalt that can be named, and a specific meaning projected on it. The man-made structures enable us to inhabit the landscape, instead of remaining mere bypassers. Places structure our experience of the world as well as our understanding of ourselves; we cannot mentally exist in a non-place. “I am the space where I am”, as the French poet Noël Arnaud argues. As I enter a space, the space enters me, and the self cannot be separated from space and place.

Architecture is usually regarded as the art of articulating space, but it structures and domesticates space, place, and time to be lived and inhabited by us. As Karsten Harries, the philosopher, argues: “Architecture is not only about domesticating space, it is also a deep defence against the terror of time. The language of beauty is essentially the language of timeless reality”. Places,
cities and buildings also structure our experiences of time as they give measureless and endless time a human scale, and make the continuum of time conceivable to the human mind. Space, time and place are human artefacts, our mental projections and products; we live in a world of our own making.

The temporal layering of man-made structures has a significant mental task. With its layered historicity the human habitat materializes and concretizes the passage of time. Buildings are simultaneously instrumental devices and artistic expressions, objects of utility and of metaphysical contemplation. Architectural structures also concretize hierarchies and mark the worlds of divinities and mortals. Rudolf Wittkower describes the metaphysical intention in Renaissance architecture as follows: “The belief in the correspondence of macrocosm and microcosm, in the harmonic structure of the universe, in the comprehension of God through the mathematical symbols of centre, circle and sphere – all these closely related ideas which had their roots in antiquity, and belonged to the undisputed tenets of medieval philosophy and theology, acquired new life in the Renaissance ...” The essence of architectural expression is the human existential condition, as in all other art forms.

Historically, architecture has been regarded as the art of mediation between the sacred and the profane, material and mental, utility and symbolization. The language of architecture – geometry, rhythm, proportion, materiality and illumination – has been the means of this mediation. Architectural constructions have marked and concretised man’s location on earth and the primary orientations of his existence.

It is, indeed, saddening to realize that in our world of reason, utility and aestheticization, architecture has given up its historically most fundamental mediating task, and turned into autonomous objects.

MODERN NOMADISM
Somewhere in literature I have encountered the notion “urban nomad”. This notion refers to today’s increasing frequency of changing one’s domicile (the average period of living in one location in the USA is barely over four years, I recall), or, perhaps, more specifically to a contemporary metropolitan nomadism, a novel lifestyle without a home altogether, without a fixed point of reference and return. The mobility of life today, however, extends far beyond urban nomadism; it is turning increasingly into an existential nomadism, an experience of life itself in constant transition without roots and domicile. The human capacities of dream and imagination offer us means of immaterial transit, but today’s technologies from machines of physical mobility to electronic transit and fictitious and virtual mobility overrun our capacities of mental imagination. We can say that reality is replacing imagination, and that facts surpass fiction. However, Jorge Luis Borges makes a significant remark on the interplay of the real and the imaginary: “Reality is not always probable, or likely. But if you are writing a story, you have to make it as plausible as you can, because otherwise the reader’s imagination will reject it.”

Biological life is bound to space and place, and so is human culture. Territoriality is a significant force in all animal life. Also we humans are fundamentally biological, cultural and historical beings, and the development towards increasing mobility, detachment and speed must have dramatic consequences on our consciousness, sense of belonging and responsibility as well as our ethical responses. And for human imagination itself, I believe.

In his seminal book *Place and Placelessness* (1976) Edward Relph introduces the notion “existential outsideness”: “Existential outsideness involves a selfconscious and reflective uninvolvment, an alienation from people and places, a homelessness, a sense of the unreality of the world, and of not belonging.” Relph explains his concept further by quoting Max Scheler: “To find one’s place in the world, the world must be a cosmos. In a chaos there is no place.” In
my view, there can hardly be any sense of self in chaos, either. The world and the self define each other mutually in accordance with Merleau-Ponty’s notion of chiasmatic intertwining.

Scheler’s argument evokes the question: What kind of a concept of cosmos are we projecting today in order to structure our brave new world? Haven’t we lost our sense of cosmos and center entirely?

I wish to use the anthropological example of the nomadic Rendile tribe living in Kenya to point out the significance of the image of cosmos as an organizing image of human life. The Rendile people are constantly on the move. Every morning the women of the tribe disassemble the huts constructed of arched wooden frames and leather surfaces, and load them on camels to move on to the next destination on their endless journey. In the evening the women unload the huts and reconstruct them in the configuration of a circle that has a wider open space towards the rising sun in the east. The chief’s hut is always erected on the opposite side of the circle with its door facing the rising sun. These traditional nomads carry the structure of their cosmos in their memory and they reconstruct the image of their world, their *Imago Mundi*, the temporal cycle of the day, as well as their social order every single day. They concretize their space and time as well as their social hierarchy through the very structure of their settlement. Cosmological narratives, rites and rituals of other cultures serve the very same purpose. The Dogon people, for instance, living in Mali, south of Sahara, reinact their complex cosmology every single day in each one of their daily chores. Permanence and change are bound to a closed and meaningful circuit.

**MOBILITY AND MODERNITY**

Cosmopolitanism, travel, and increasing detachment from cultural as well as social ties were seen early on as desirable qualities of modern life. The modern hero was the flaneur, globetrotter,
and explorer. With the recent explosive expansion of globalized economies and businesses, world-wide trends and fashions, and constant acceleration of change, culture is becoming increasingly independent from locality and historicity, and turning into an endless and restless flux; materials and products, people and capital, ideas and desires, are orbiting around the globe at an ever increasing pace.

The digital universe is the newest expansion of this flux. The amount of placeless digital information is already truly dizzying: today there are one billion PC Internet users, 600 billion Internet pages, 2 billion Google searches per month, and 1 million e-mails sent every second.\(^3\) In addition to the fact that material goods and people are today detached from their origins, information, knowledge and entertainment are also increasingly displaced. This implies the loss of origins, or the disappearance of the truth of origin. The ideal of mobility is accompanied by the seductive appeal of speed and immateriality. “All that is solid melts into air”, as Karl Marx predicted already in 1856\(^2\), and this evaporation and disappearance is certainly true today. We are lost in a simultaneous and placeless world of endless mobility. Characteristically, the beginning sentence of any mobile telephone conversation today is: “Where are you?” “Here no longer exists; everything is now”, as Paul Virilio argues.

“To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. […] As a result of all this, we find ourselves today in the midst of a modern age that has lost touch with the roots of its modernity”, writes Marshall Berman in his book that quotes the prophecy of Karl Marx as its very title.

Berman points out the catastrophic consequences of the very

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\(^{2}\) “All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all newformed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and men at last are forced to face .. the real conditions of their lives and their relations with their fellow men.” (Marx 1856)
dynamism of modernity: “The [...] dynamism of the modern economy, and of the culture that grows from this economy, annihilates everything that it creates – physical environments, social institutions, metaphysical ideas, artistic visions, moral values – in order to create more, to go on endlessly creating the world anew. This drive draws all modern men and women into its orbit ....”

In 1862 Fyodor Dostoevsky made a thoughtprovoking remark on our modern desire to create and construct, on the one hand, and our incapability to dwell, on the other: “Man loves to create and build roads, that is beyond dispute. But [...] may it not be that [...] he is instinctively afraid of attaining his goal and completing the edifice he is constructing? How do you know, perhaps he only likes that edifice from a distance and not at close range, perhaps he only likes to build it, and does not want to live in it.” Marx was, in fact, commenting on the Christal Palace of 1851 in London, one of the true marvels of human construction. Our incapability to dwell was, of course, one of Martin Heidegger’s themes a full century later. Aren’t we even today obsessively making and building a new world and, at the same time, detaching ourselves from an erotic intimacy with the world, from the “flesh of world”, to use the poetic notion of Maurice Merleau-Ponty?3 Aren’t we more interested in efficiency and production than our own existence itself? Aren’t we more interested in having than being, as Erich Fromm suggested? Are we loosing our capacity to dwell, to inhabit the world poetically, as Heidegger suggested paraphrasing Hoelderlin.

The modernist poet Octavio Paz points out the tragic loss of roots

in modernity as a consequence of its mere speed: “[Modernity is]

3 Merleau-Ponty describes the notion of the flesh in his essay “The Intertwining – The Chiasm”, The Visible and the Invisible, ed. Claude Lefort (Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1969): “My body is made of the same flesh as the world [...] and moreover [...] this flesh of my body is shared by the world [...],” and; “The flesh (of the world or my own) is [...] a texture that returns to itself and conforms to itself”. The notion of “the flesh” derives form Merleau-Ponty’s dialectical principle of the intertwining of the world and the self. He also speaks of the “ontology of the flesh” as the ultimate conclusion of his initial phenomenology of perception. This ontology implies that meaning is both within and without, subjective and objective, spiritual and material. (Kearney, R. 1994, p. 73-90)
cut off from the past and continuously hurtling forward at such a
dizzy pace that it cannot take root, that it merely survives from one
day to the next: it is unable to return to its beginnings and thus
recover its powers of renewal.” The poet’s remark suggests that
in our obsession with progress we could well be regressing and
going qualitatively backwards. This paradox of apparent material
progress and spiritual impoverishment has, indeed, been pointed
out by numerous thinkers.

In the beginning of the modern era, Baudelaire depicted a modern
hero in his essay “Painters of Modern Life”, who should “set up
his house in the heart of the multitude amid the ebb and flow of
motion, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite in the midst of
the metropolitan crowd. […] This love of universal life [must] enter
into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical
energy […] Or we might compare him to a kaleidoscope gifted
with consciousness.” Doesn’t this weird image of infiniteness,
cosmopolitan collectivity and kaleidoscopic consciousness resemble
our current reality as represented by the ever expanding labyrinth
of the digital web?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ROOTS

Allow me to quote an entirely opposite view on the crucial
importance of cultural and mental roots. This view is expressed by
Simone Weil in her book L’enracinement, The Need for Roots: “To be
rooted is perhaps the most important and least appreciated need of
the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A person has roots
by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of
the community, which preserves in living shape certain particular
expectations for the future […] Every human being needs to have
multiple roots. It is necessary for him to draw wellnigh the whole of
his moral, intellectual, and spiritual life by way of the environment
of which he forms a part”.
The protagonist of Homo Faber, written by Max Frisch (an architect by
training) exemplifies the modern mobile and emancipated hero. He is an Unesco expert who constantly travels the world on his expert missions. His apparent freedom brought about by mobility and detachment from place, finally turns into an unbearable tragedy; the protagonist ends up making love to his own daughter whom he cannot identify because of his loss of roots and the memory and moral criteria brought about by human placedness. This is the delusion of space and time; as the criteria of “where” and “when”, place and time, lose their meanings, the existential situation loses its gravity, its sense of the real and authority, as well as its very ethical ground.

The ceaseless exploration of the secrets of the world has the tendency of eliminating the mythical, magical and enticing dimensions of reality; the realm of myth and belief turns into scientific knowledge and rationality, magic turns into utility, and symbols into everyday reality. The primordial world of dream, imagery and mental projection is emptied of meaning. This is the ground for the existential poverty and boredom of our scientific world. The moon used to be symbolized by silver and it was itself the symbol of romantic love, not to speak of being the projection of countless aspects of “the other”. Man’s first journey to the moon devaluated this celestial body to a mere dead mass of matter and dust. The advancement of our mobility and rationalization turned the credo of the Futurists, “Down with the Moon”, into an experiential reality.

The victories of progress also, sadly, imply the loss of the utopian dimension; there is no utopia on this earth any more, only progress and its reversal, dystopia.

THE COLLAPSE OF TIME

Philosophers of postmodernity, such as David Harvey, Fredric Jameson and Daniel Bell have identified distinct changes that have taken place in our perception and understanding of space and time.
“Space has become the primary aesthetic problem of mid-twentieth century culture as the problem of time (in Bergson, Proust and Joyce) was the primary aesthetic problem of the first decades of this century”, Fredric Jameson writes. These writers have, for instance, pointed out a curious reversal, or exchange of the two fundamental physical dimensions: the spatialization of time. In my view, the other reversal has also taken place: the temporalization of space. These reversals are exemplified by the fact that we commonly measure space through units of time and vice versa. The postmodern era of speed and mobility has also brought about a curious new phenomenon; the collapse or implosion of the time horizon onto the flat screen of the present. Today we can appropriately speak of a simultaneity of the world; everything is simultaneously present to our consciousness. David Harvey writes in 1989 about the “time-space compression” and argues: “I want to suggest that we have been experiencing, these last two decades, an intense phase of time-space compression that has had a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practice, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life.” This process of compression has certainly dramatically continued and accelerated during the two decades since Harvey made his argument.

Mobility has other mental consequences, too; it has the tendency of cancelling the vertical dimension in our experience of the world. Until a century ago, the vertical tension between Heaven and Hell, the above and the below, divinities and mortals, dominated the human experiential world. Today’s world of quasi-rationality, physical mobility and digital nets is a world of mere horizontality. We do not look up into the sky any longer, our gaze is fixed on the horizon; we do not look at our ultimate future in the heavens but beyond the horizon. The mythical and cosmic dimensions are lost. Gaston Bachelard points out that even dwelling has lost its vertical dimension and turned into horizontality. He quotes Joë Bousque, the French poet, who writes of a “one-storied man who has his cellar in his attic”. We have our Heaven in Hell, and vice versa; this loss of the “second dimension”, or “the other” of our lives was already
suggested by Herbert Marcuse in his *One-Dimensional Man* (1964).

Another evident consequence of mobility and speed is the shrinking of the world. In fact, the instantaneity of the world eliminates the geographic reality of the world altogether; the world turns into a collection of images, travel posters and tv programs. In his book *A Landscape of Events* Paul Virilio, the philosopher of speed, mentions Donald Trump’s “supersonic golf tournament”. The performance took place on three different continents on one and the same day: apparently organized on 3 August, 1996, the sixty participants were able to putt successively in Marrakesh (Africa), Shannon (Europe), and Atlantic City (United States). Thanks to the chartering of a special Concorde, three continents were reduced to the size of a golf course and the confines of the earth to those of a green.

In this process of time-space compression, time has lost its experiential depth, its plasticity, as it were. This collapse is brought about by an incredible acceleration of time in the contemporary world. Speed is the most seminal product of the current phase of industrial culture; the industrial world is not primarily producing products and services, but it is accelerating consumption and oblivion. This development has given rise to a “philosophy of speed”, as exemplified by the writings of Paul Virilio; Virilio calls his science of speed “dromology”. The aesthetics of speed, however, was introduced already in the first decades of last century. “The world’s magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty; the beauty of speed”, F.T. Marinetti declared in the futurist Manifesto almost a century ago.

**AN ARCHITECTURE OF DEATH**

A fascination with speed and the unavoidable collisions of matter and thought, as well as rejection of causality, are clearly the essence of deconstructivist thinking. It is also characteristic to current avantgarde architecture to question traditional humanist
architectural values and ethics.

Coop Himmelblau, one of the avantgarde architectural offices of past two decades, declares an “architecture of desolation”, an architectural aesthetics of speed, compression, fragmentation and death: “The aesthetics of the architecture of death in white sheets. Death in tiled hospital rooms. The architecture of sudden death on the pavement. Death from a rib-cage pierced by a steering shaft. The path of the bullet through a dealer’s head on 42nd street. The aesthetics of the architecture of the surgeon’s razor-sharp scalpel. The aesthetics of the peep-show sex in washable plastic boxes. Of the broken tongues and the dried-up eyes.”

This culturally aggressive nihilism, or cultural terrorism inspired by technological determinism and speed, has its predecessors in the Futurist Movement almost a century ago: “Take up your pickaxes, your axes and hammers, and wreck, wreck the venerable cities, pitilessly! Come on! Set fire to the library shelves! Turn aside the canals to flood the museums!” commands the Manifesto of the Futurist Painters in 1910. “We look for the creation of a nonhuman type in whom moral suffering, goodness of heart, affection, and love, those corrosive poisons of vital energy, interrupters of powerful bodily electricity, will be abolished”. F.T. Marinetti prophesied a year earlier. This is, indeed, a reality today in the world of entertainment, and, increasingly, in real life. Aestheticization and ritualization of cruelty, madness and death of empathy is clearly emerging in real life, too.

THE CULTURE OF SLOWNESS

The dizzying acceleration of experiential time and the accompanying sense of disaster during the past few decades is rather easy to recognize in comparison with the slow and patient time projected by the great Russian, German and French classical novels of the nineteenth century. It suffices here to mention the slow description
of the protagonist Hans Castorp’s seven year stay in the Berghof Sanatorium in Thomas Mann’s novel *The Magic Mountain*, or the three thousand and five hundred pages of Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*.

Italo Calvino comments interestingly on this acceleration of time during the past century: “Long novels written today are perhaps a contradiction: the dimension of time has been shattered, we cannot live or think except in fragments of time each of which goes off along its trajectory and immediately disappears. We can re-discover the continuity of time only in the novels of that period when time no longer seemed stopped and did not yet seem to have exploded”.

It is quite astonishing to find the lament of Abbé Lamennais about the disappearance of time written already in 1819: “Man does not read any longer. There is no time for it. The spirit is called upon from all directions simultaneously; it has to be addressed quickly or else it disappears. But there are things, which cannot be said or comprehended quickly, and exactly these are most important for man. This rushing of movement, which does not allow man to concentrate on anything, finally shatters the entire human reason.”

I give this piece of literary evidence, dating back two centuries, as an evidence that this problem has its roots deep in the history of modern culture. Our loss of time and place is the consequence of a historical process.

Marcel Proust makes an interesting comment on the alteration of our consciousness of time since the Roman era: “Since railways came into existence, the necessity of not missing trains has taught us to take account of minutes, whereas among the ancient Romans, who not only had a more cursory acquaintance with astronomy but led less hurried lives, the notion of not only of minutes but even of fixed hours barely existed.”

The postmodern philosophers point out a distinct “depthlessness” as a characteristic of today’s art, and we cannot but agree with Charles Newman’s sad description of the American novel today: “The fact of the matter is that a sense of diminishing control, loss
of individual autonomy and generalized helplessness has never been so instantaneously recognizable in our literature – the flattest possible characters in the flattest possible landscapes rendered in the flattest possible diction. The presumption seems to be that American is a vast fibrous desert in which a few laconic needs nevertheless manage to sprout in the cracks.” In my view, the same flatness and lack of epic depth characterizes the main streams of the other art forms as well including architecture.

I wish to point out a fundamental change that has recently occurred in a minute and commonplace detail; the difference in the reading of time by means of a traditional watch and a digital watch (my quote derives from a book entitled Conversations About the End of Time published at the turn of the Millennium): “When you look at a watch dial for the time, that is situated within the circle of time, you immediately recall what you have done in the course of the day, where you were this morning, what time it was when you bumped into your friend, you remember when dusk is going to fall, and you see the time that’s left before bedtime, when you’ll go to bed sure in the knowledge of another day well spent, and with the certainty also that on the following day time will resume its daily course around your watch. If all you’ve got is a little rectangle, you have to live life as a series of moments, and you lose all true measure of time.” This is the fundamental experiential difference between analogical and digital measuring. What is lost with the digital watch is the cyclical nature of natural time.

What is even more essentially lost in the digital world is our natural sensory memory. Milan Kundera makes a remark to that effect: “The degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting.” This lecture of mine intends to point out the virtues and benefits of slowness, or the “chemistry of time”. to use a notion of Proust, and the “poetic chemistry” of Bachelard.

We have all the reason to be frightened by the disappearance and abstraction of time and the curiously related phenomenon: the expansion of boredom. I am not going to enter this subject matter,
however, beyond simply referring to a recent book on the philosophy of boredom by the Norwegian philosopher Lars Svendsen. It seems to me that a distinct slowness reveals the depth and detail of life whereas speed and mobility wipe those dimensions away causing a sense of intolerable flatness, sameness and boredom. Besides, speed and transition eliminate the erotic dimension of the world. Just think of the absolutely least erotic places on earth – international airports⁴. For me, the ultimate criteria of architectural quality is whether you can imagine falling in love in the space in question – can anyone of you imagine yourself falling in love at an airport?

I would like to suggest that we have lost our capacity to dwell in time, or inhabit time. We have been pushed outside of the space of time. Time has turned into a vacuum in opposition to the “tactile sense of [time]” in Proust’s writings, for instance. We live increasingly outside of the continuum of time, the Bergsonian duration; we dwell solely in space. It is tragic, indeed, that in the era of four-dimensional, or multi-dimensional, space in our scientific and operational thinking, we are experientially thrown back to Euclidean space restricted to its three spatial dimensions. We have all the reason even to be worried of the disappearance of the third dimension, the depth of space. The substance of time seems to exist nowadays only as archaeological remains in the literary, artistic and architectural works of past eras. Similarly, the originary silence of the world exists only in fragments, but as Max Picard, the philosopher of silence, suggests, we are frightened by all fragments. We are equally frightened by fragments of silence, time and solitude.

⁴ Nevertheless, Alberto Pérez-Gómez’s book Polyphilo or the Dark Forest Revisited: An Erotic Epiphany of Architecture is a novel of erotic events taking place at airports; the book is a restaging of Francesco Colonna’s mystical novel Hypnerotomachia Poliphili; published in Venice in 1499.
LIVING IN DIGITAL SPACE

The simultaneous placelessness and timelessness of modern existential space, and the consequent detachment from a haptic realism and intimacy has been violently reinforced by the digital reality. The computer and the digital universe are frequently greeted with unconditional enthusiasm. I do not wish to promote a Luddite attitude against the advancement of technology, but I want to consider the potential negative consequences of these entirely unforeseen dimensions of reality in relation to our bio-cultural essence, our profound historicity as well as our fundamental sensory mode of existence. Our bodily, sensory and mental constitution is clearly tuned to the characteristics of our natural habitat, not to a digital unreality.

“Technology today is more precise and more powerful than the human body. […] We´re no longer limited in space to the biosphere [...] We´re heading for extraterrestrial space, but our body is only designed for this biosphere”, Stelios Accadiou argues. I would like to add that also our sensory systems are tuned for a world of material and gravitational realism. I would venture to argue that the experiences of beauty that our senses enjoy derive from the natural materiality, rhythm and causation of the natural world. I do not argue that the experience of beauty could not be expanded beyond the “natural”, I simply believe that our sense of beauty has its biocultural origins. Joseph Brodsky, the poet, argues emphatically: “Believe it or not, the purpose of evolution is beauty.”

In her doctoral dissertation Architectural Space in the Digital Age Gül Kaçmaz concludes wisely that “Cyberspace, hyperspace and exospace all have spatial qualities; they are forms of space, but none of them can be considered as architectural space. Features of architectural space contradict with these spaces. Digitally supported spaces are like the opposite of architectural space: they have features that are the reverse of architectural space. They are actually ‘the other’ for architectural space.” Architectural space is real, it has materiality, it is continuous and static, and architectural space is extroverted, she argues.
NOSTALGIA FOR THE ABSENT HOME

As Joseph Brodsky argues in the motto of my essay, mobility complicates our sense of nostalgia. The word “nostalgia” was introduced in 1678 by a Swiss medical student, Johannes Hofer, who described an illness that was characterised by symptoms such as insomnia, anorexia, palpitations, stupor, fever, and especially persistent thinking of home. Hofer and later physicians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries believed that this disease, the longing for home, or homesickness, could result in death if the patient could not be returned home.

One of the most touching expressions of nostalgia, the reverse side of mobility, in our time is Andrey Tarkovsky’s film *Nostalgia* (1983), in which the protagonist, the Russian poet Andrei Gorchakov finally dies of heart attack and his strange friend, the mad mathematician Domenico, commits a suicide by self-immolation. Both men are estranged, the first from the reality of place and the second from the reality of sane judgement.

All of Tarkovsky’s films are about the perpetual search for home, the lost home of childhood. The tension between the notions of ‘house’ and ‘home’ is a central motif in the life’s work of Andrey Tarkovsky as well as in the poems of his father. In the communist state home also implied being under control - home became to mean a concentration camp. That is why home turned into a mystical dream in their artistic work.

The conflict and dialectics between the notions of “architecture” and “home” should also be a central concern for architects. The separation of notions of house and home is at the root of modernity. The dialectics of alienation and belonging, and the difficulty, or impossibility of homecoming, are central themes of modern existence. Homecoming is necessarily grounded in remembrance, and implies the conservatism of returning, whereas the essence of modernity implies forgetting and a brave journey without return towards an emancipated future. Consequently, the modern position
denies the conventional dimensions of dwelling; the notions of home and homelessness, specificity and generality, fuse tragically with each other in the modern project. The ideal of the perfectly functional house, the modern “machine for dwelling” aims at eliminating discomfort and friction, but the realisation of the self within the world implies a confrontation. As a consequence, the dialectics of intimacy and distance, invitation and rejection, are necessarily characteristic of architectural works capable of evoking an existentially meaningful experience.

In the view of Aldo van Eyck, one of the modern master architects who questioned the very essence of modernity, sought to re-root architecture in its authentic anthropological soil: “Architecture needs no more, nor should it ever do less, than assist man’s homecoming”. The alienation and detachment caused by the modern project call for the acknowledgement of our very historicity and our essential need for a spiritual homecoming. This homecoming can only be grounded in the re-enchantment, re-mythification and re-eroticization of our very existential realm.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, one of the early avian heroes of modern mobility gives a surprisingly sensual and poetic account of his sense of homecoming after he had crash-landed in an African desert: “I was the child of that house, filled with the memory of its smells, filled with the coolness of its hallways, filled with the voices that had given it life. There was even the song of the frogs in the pools; they came to be with me here.”

“Philosophy is really homesickness, an urge to be at home everywhere. Where, then are we going? Always to our home.”

Novalis
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INTRODUCTION

Landscape is a ‘picture representing natural inland scenery’ (Oxford Concise Dictionary of English Etymology). This means that a landscape has a representational value in relation to the physical content of what is ‘depicted’. It also means that we cannot talk of a landscape beyond human interference. We make, produce and represent landscapes using natural made and human made components, and we set these arrangements or sceneries into speech or other types of representations. Landscapes are human creations wherein we layer our intentions in relation to a magnitude and multitude of meanings and understandings. In this sense landscapes are often characterized by being made of cultural strata that to some extent resembles historical and natural geological strata.

There is a clear distinction and dialectics between nature and landscape, where nature is both encompassing and engulfed in landscapes. Nature, in its essence, transcends landscapes by existing beyond our knowledge of it and at the same time it is compartmentalized, fragmented and utilized as ingredient in landscapes. It is the question whether the transcendental and pre-conditional existence and quality of nature is still at hand, because human species have managed to colonize major part of the surface of the earth and such a thing as ‘unspoiled nature’ or genuine/original nature is hard to find wherever we look. Carolyn Merchant declared the Death of Nature as we began our colonizing work by the introduction of the modern scientific paradigm in the 17th century. By the aid of technology in various guises we have managed to invade nature in all its elements and on all levels. We have set nature into representational pictures, sentences and formulas. It is the question whether the essential original reading of nature as being something outside of us is still true, because what characterizes contemporary understanding of nature manifests as utilitarian and representational. In this way landscape has paradoxically become synonymous to nature when dealing with nature as geographical and topographical entity, but nevertheless still persists a rather Romantic understanding of nature as something outward, bigger
and stronger than us. This article will to a certain extent discuss the intriguing relationship between nature and landscape seen from the perspective of human dwelling.

Dwelling is the former principle of architecture in relation to nature. Dwelling creates shelter for temperature, wind, light and rain, which are all elements of nature. It protects us from the intemperance of nature and in this way the shelter creates a distinction to nature. Dwellings are on an ontological level relational to nature by being both part of and made of natural elements, and at the same time it stands out as alien to the ways and means of nature itself. We may be inspired by nature when we construct our dwellings, which was the case of the French Marc-Antoine Laugier in Essai sur l’Architecture (1753). In the primitive hut are present, according to Laugier, the eminent principles of architecture stripped to the bone and carried forward by a strong and impressive representation, which is still referred to in any class on theory, philosophy and history of architecture.

Dwellings are as well how we are in the world and how we relate to reality. Dwellings are cultural and social entities that speak and represent this being-in-the-world and as such dwellings are integrated and inseparable from landscapes. This phenomenological and contextual reading of existential dwelling remains in the core of the following paragraphs and leads to the question that I shall try to elaborate upon: “How to dwell in a landscape?”

Representational and historical sceneries of landscape and dwelling
Pictures or representations of landscapes have been made ever since man began to reflect upon ‘being-in-the-world’ and in this specific case we shall focus upon how we technologically have incorporated nature, through dwellings, making it into landscapes. We shall do this by looking at actual and situational incorporations that have manifested in paintings and actual architecture. The selections made are governed and directed by the question raised on how to dwell in landscapes and the intent of the following analysis is to clarify and elucidate on various historical and philosophical ways of being-in-the-world through and by dwellings.
Holy Francis of Assisi left his wealthy background and family in the summer of 1208 and wandered down to the lowlands of the Assisi surroundings. These lowlands were characterized by a typical Umbrian low forestall wilderness where shepherds led their households, and, in addition, small isolated settlements. Less than five miles, from the center of Assisi, Francis found a spot where he and his fellows and women constructed a community, where nature and the respect for nature were architecturally framed enhancing and enforcing behavior and attitude amongst the community. The accommodation of nature became through two essential approaches where respect for nature and the elements of nature was one, and social behavior and attitude in relation to interaction and communication was the other. St. Francis attitude towards nature is not outstanding or isolated in confrontation with contemporary understandings of nature, but what strikes is how the elements of nature, plants, flowers and animals, are treated and respected as equals. Nature and natural elements are creatures of Divine creativity and will, which means that there is no schism in the attitude or holding of Francis in relation to subject/object relationship. The holistic skhema of Francis becomes radically clear in a series of anecdotes that accounts for how Francis spoke to birds and a ferocious wolf that he managed to calm down. In the eye and mind of Francis man was not posed in a supreme position in relation to nature and natural elements, which had a vital and crucial meaning when it comes to how Francis and Franciscans thought of material life.

In the two selected paintings (see p. 204), by respectively Giotto di Bondone and Giovanni Bellini, we see some specific characteristics for what concerns the relationship between nature/landscape and dwelling. In the painting by Giotto we see how the doorway in the Gothic miniature building is mimetically repeating the cave opening in the rock, which clearly indicates the how Giotto interprets the relationship between architecture and nature. Architecture is in this case builds on the principles and occurrences in nature, where the building is a direct translation/transformation of nature into brick
and clad. It is obvious that it goes the other way around as well, because by the building we recognize structural and architectural elements in nature. We project pattern, scheme and structure upon nature by building a model that orders and systemizes elements of nature.

Giotto interweaves all basic elements in the painting into a network made of nodes where all ‘bodies’: the cliff, the building, the body of Francis and Christ on the Cross are placed in a chiasm (X), whereby nature, culture, physics and metaphysics are closely tied together.

Giovanni Bellini’s painting is showing a different type of nature/landscape and dwelling, which means that the relationship also is fundamentally different. The landscape is rural and domesticated, and in the background we see represented the outline of Assisi. Francis is depicted in what could be an everyday life setting, praying and reading. The simple dwelling gives shelter for the burning sun and is a typical pergola with wine ranks that makes cover. The pergola is erected in front of a hole in the cliff, which once again

Left: ‘St. Francis receiving the Stigmata’, Giotto 1308  
Right: ‘St. Francis in the Desert’, Giovanni Bellini 1525
points at the presence of a cave. Nature offering solid possibility for dwelling and shelter, where the ephemeral pergola could point in direction of the fragility and temporality of human existence. The simplicity of the cave and pergola is confronted by the cultural setting of the landscape and the city of Assisi in the background, and we understand how the figure of Francis is torn in between the two realities. The cave and pergola could be read as some sort of retreat from the busy and material urban life. A phenomenon that was actually becoming in the time of Bellini where wealthy citizens of contemporary metropolis sought retreat in neighboring ‘campagna’. This shows in Rome, Florence and Venice, just to mention the most evident cases of the phenomenon. The dwellings of the urban nomenclature in rural settings were not ephemeral and simple, but the philosophical principles in relation to nature were certainly present in the rural settlings, which for instance the activity of Andrea Palladio in Veneto region in Northeast Italy is an exemplary sample of. Especially Palladio’s early villas of the 1540’s bear clear evidence of being abstractions and reductions of both classical architecture and local building tradition, and does not yet bear witness of the later expression and meaning of domination and control, like in for instance La Rotunda (1560).

In the 17th century we see an increasing attention amongst artists toward representing nature as meaningful and important player in relation to the overall motive of the representation, and especially the French Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin were concerned with the cultural transformation of nature into landscapes. Lorrain and Poussin lived most of their lives in Rome and were commissioned by the Roman clerical nomenclature for their works. This has a saying for what concerns the actual landscapes that were depicted in the archaic sceneries of mainly mythological content, because what we find in the paintings are representations of the countryside around Rome. The playground of Gods, emperors, Roman nomenclature and in the 17th-19th centuries beloved motive of artists travelling and staying in Rome.

Claude Lorrain’s painting “Landscape with Apollo and Muses” (1652) (see p. 207) was commissioned by Cardinal Camillo Astalli
Pamphili, a nephew of the pope Innocent X, and in the motive we find several interesting elements present for what concerns the topic of this specific discussion upon dwelling and landscape. In the background of the scenery we find the outline of Monte Soratte, which is placed 40 kilometers north of Rome and part of the Sabine Mountains. This means that the actual setting has a meaning and saying because the story and mythology of these hills and mountains are rich in ancient Roman history, and is echoed in the actual representation. On the left in the painting we find a classical building upheaved on a hill. From a compositional point of view there is a clear diagonal line from the lying figure of Apollo to the little temple on the hilltop. We have a clear impression of distance and inaccessibility in both the Apollo figure and the temple, whereas nature and landscape gently embraces the earthly figures in the middle ground of the scenery. Yet at the same time the temple is growing out of the cliff and falls at ease as integrated part of the landscape, as some sort of sublimation and synthesis of the story told by Lorrain. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger did probably not have knowledge of this painting, but his words about the temple in the “Origin of the Work of Art” (1951) resonates when contemplating on Lorrain’s representation: “Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the mystery of that rocks clumsy yet spontaneous support…..The Greeks early called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things phusis. It clears and illuminates, also, that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the earth. What this word says is not to be associated with the idea of mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation. In things that arise, earth is present as the sheltering agent” (Heidegger 1971, p. 41). It is hard to imagine any scenery or imagery that reflects more precisely the words of Heidegger than the little temple in the painting of Lorrain. In it we find the four-foldedness of things where heaven, earth, mortals and immortals are present simultaneously and truly represent dwelling as a clearing and sublimation of phusis.
We have already mentioned the primitive hut by Marc-Antoine Laugier (1753) and its importance and impact on theory and practice in architecture. Laugier partook in a vivid and rather dramatic discussion upon the ways and means of architecture where also the Venetians Carlo Lodoli, Alessandro Algarotti and Francesco Milizia were part. They all strongly reacted toward tendencies in contemporary late baroque and rococo architecture in which they saw the extravagant decay of ornament as ruling principle. Mainly Laugier and Lodoli sought through their teaching and publication to make an impact on architectural practice and advocated for a return to the primary elements of architecture.

It is worthwhile to quote the original words of Laugier on the qualities of the primitive hut in relation to architecture, because fundamental in understanding the theoretical and philosophical roots of modern architecture of the 20th century.

“Le petite cabanne rustique que je viens de decrier, est le modele sur lequel on a imagine toutes les magnificences de l’Architecture, c’est en se raprochant
Laugier states that the moment we stepped out of the dark and damp cave we immediately engaged with surrounding nature and from it became the archetype of the hut, the primary model for magnificent architecture. Laugier’s perspective on nature is utilitarian and as such reflecting Empiricist readings on nature stemming from philosophy of nature and science from the 17th century, mainly Francis Bacon and John Locke. It is not as if architecture inherits metaphysical qualities of nature by being based on natural elements, but rather nature offering principles for construction, assembly and harmonious composition. Laugier is not concerned with contextual meaning of architecture in relation to environment or social setting, but with aesthetic qualities of simplicity and authenticity in relation to dwelling.

Laugier is fairly clear about formal and stylistic preferences in relation to architecture and he finds that the Greek temple in its origin, which means the Doric style, surpasses any posterior elaboration made by any civilization or culture. Yet it is evident that Laugier does not deal with the transcendental and metaphysical value of the temple or the primitive hut (see p. 209, ‘The Primitive Hut’, Marc-Antione Laugier, 1753), but is concerned with the formal and aesthetic qualities of elementary ‘building blocks’ of architecture. In this way Laugier points forward in time and has been considered by the modernistic avant-garde of the beginning of the 20th century as emblematic and exemplary for a type of architecture that was concerned with the elementary and basic qualities of architecture and here we should mention architects like Adolph Loos, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe as modernist interpreters of the original ideas of Laugier, which Adrian Forty has summarized to the following: “in order to demonstrate an idea of architecture as a rational system” (Forty 2000, p. 221).

The step into modernity is quite natural when it comes to the ideal and formal links between Laugier and the modernist avant-garde,
and we shall return to the European interpretation of ‘elementary sentences’ in architecture. But before that I shall turn the attention toward dwelling and landscape in an American context, because inevitable the moment we look upon the relation between expanding culture and technology in relation to vast nature of the American continent.

The technological sublime of American approaches to dealing with nature and landscape has been thoroughly analyzed by the American philosopher of technology David E. Nye on more occasions. And what characterizes the typical American approach can be summarized in James C. Carter’s oration of the Niagara Falls from 1885, which Nye comments upon in the following way: “By conflating the man-made and the natural, Carter suggests that the technological sublime is identical with the natural sublime. Here is that typical American amalgamation of natural, technological, classical and religious elements into a single aesthetic. In it, natural wonders, such as Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, and Yellowstone, became emblems of divinity comparable to the wonders of the ancient world and the greatest architectural achievements of modern times” (Nye 1994/99, p. 23). Accordingly there is no schism between nature and man-made or built world. Man-made artifacts, like architecture, complements nature and assist in the creation of national identity and to a large extent these amalgamations were of popular character, revolved toward the crowd (Nye 1993/99, p. 30-33).

The cave or the pergola for meditation and reflection, the primitive hut and the solitary temple on the rock were meant for philosophical and religious contemplation of individual character, whereas the American reading of the meaning of nature and landscape in relation to dwelling and appropriation had grandeur and size of scale in relation to a crowd at the core. Human built world and nature were inscribed in a democratic framework for understanding and action and together they: “purified and uplifted the mind and helped individuals see themselves as members of a larger community” (Nye 1993/99, p. 35-36). This specific approach
to nature and landscape called for a hybrid imagination in relation to settlement and dwelling because, as Nye points out: “The sublime was inseparable from a peculiar double action of the imagination by which the land was appropriated as a natural symbol of the nation while, at the same time, it was being transformed into a man-made landscape. One appeal of the technological sublime in America was that it conflated the preservation and the transformation of the natural world” (Nye 1993/99, p. 37). In this perspective we find that human dwelling in nature becomes part of a greater and more general project on how we are as practical citizens in a society characterized by expansion and growth. “Rather than the result of solitary communion with nature, the sublime became an experience organized for crowds of tourists. Rather than treat the sublime as part of transcendental philosophy, Americans merged it with revivalism. Not limited to nature, the American sublime embraced technology” (Nye 1993/99, p. 43). Where 19th century Romantic European readings of nature and man-made were set in a dualistic and often dichotomous relationship then the American understanding and action in relation to nature was characterized by a dialectics of intervention where preservation and transformation walked hand in hand. Landscapes were constantly made by using nature as a matter ready-to-hand and at the same time keeping nature present, in ever becoming landscapes, as iconic national symbols.

Frank Lloyd Wright’s famous Falling Water can be inscribed in this sublime vision upon man-made building in nature where the hybrid imagination of double action of transformation and preservation is at hand. The building enhances the dramatic qualities of the scenery by enframing the present site-specific elements. It makes material use of the natural elements at hand in both the exterior and interior of the building and at the same time it transforms the site dramatically by stressing the architectonic intervention mainly through the white concrete components. Frank Lloyd Wright was in his interpretation of architecture’s relation to nature deeply inspired by his master Louis H. Sullivan, who again depended on the philosophical endeavors of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson had
early in the 19th century reacted towards the European dependences upon grandeur, history and styles and wrote in 1837: “I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into today, and you may have the antique and future worlds” (Emerson 1837 in Forty 2000, p. 236). Frank Lloyd Wright was to take the notion of identity and commonness seriously in all of his villas and: “apparently absorbed many of the same Emersonian ideas, but was to realize them without resorting to naturalistic decoration” (Forty 2000, p. 236). It is emblematic, as has been stated on several occasions that Frank Lloyd Wright, and to some extent Le Corbusier and Utzon, keeps nature as vital and crucial partaker in architectural discussions and actions. Lloyd Wright writings on that behalf are fairly iniquitous and reflects many of the Romantic ideas upon nature that were proposed by the English Arts and Crafts Movement’s intellectual leader John Ruskin: “Primarily, Nature furnished the materials for architectural motifs out of which the architectural forms as we know them have developed” (Lloyd Wright 1908:86 in Forty 2000, p. 238). Falling Water is an iconic sample of how American focus upon national, regional and local natural qualities has been transformed into wood, brick and stone and become architecture that comments and discusses with the surrounding nature, and on many occasions makes transforms and preserves this nature as a cultural entity; i.e. a landscape.

As I was saying the rationalistic and utilitarian ideas of Laugier upon nature survived the attacks of emotional Romanticism and gained power in the latter part of the 19th century and stood strong through the Modernist period of the 20th century. The main arguments of Laugier of nature as a standing resource were refined by Darwinist readings and approaches and Karl Marx inscribed nature as a commodity to be aligned with other productive elements of contemporary life. For main part of architects of the European modernism nature ceased to be source of imagination, inspiration and imitation, and became mere dead objective material to be exploited and utilized for the sake of architecture and building in itself. We should learn
architecture from architecture, art from art, science from science and so forth. The compartmentalization of disciplinary objectification was supported by technological and technocratic systems and these systems achieved almost eidetic status and replaced nature as point of measure and understanding. The de-contextualized dwellings of mainly European modernism, which shows in the architectural programs and buildings of the German Bauhaus, the Dutch ‘De Stijl’, the Italian Futurism, the Soviet Constructivism and to some extent also the Scandinavian Functionalism claimed the ‘death of nature’ as spiritual and material force, and laid natural environment stripped for technological exploration, exploitation and rapture. In the following I shall try to investigate upon potentials and opportunities for dwellings in landscape and nature, where both contemporary turns upon sustainability and environmental responsibility and more philosophical and phenomenological intentional approaches are present. I am inspired in doing this by the moral and holistic standing of the German poet and scientist Goethe who wrote to his colleague and friend Schiele in 1794: “there ought to be another means of representing nature, not in separate pieces, but in living actuality, striving from the whole to the parts”. (Goethe 1794 in Forty 2000, p. 230).

The question concerning dwelling and nature
In 1850 the Danish author of fairytales, diaries and short-stories H.C. Andersen (1807-75) wrote a fairly unknown tale entitled “The Bell”. The tale is about a group of youngsters that on the day of their vow to the church and to God, hence newly confirmed persons, tries to solve the mystery of a bell-like sound that has been present in the village for generations. Seemingly the sound comes from the neighboring forest, and the brave youngsters are determined to uncover the mystery. After a whole day in the forest, combating the obstacles of bushes, plants and trees, the son of the king and a poor peasant boy manage to pass, by different paths, the forest and reach the top of a hill on the other side. From that point they are able to oversee the forest and the ocean, and at that very moment they realize that the sound of the bell is actually the ever-present
common sound of nature (God) and everything burst in a glorifying hallelujah! (Andersen 1850/2008)

In 1951 Martin Heidegger, originally a student in theology, (1889-1976) publishes a collection of essays on “Woodpaths” (Holzwege). In the essays he clarifies the nature of the forest and how we gain knowledge and understanding of the forest by following paths and structures that are determined by the forest itself (and not by planners constructing paths for leisure, walks and a like). Heidegger has a point about the paths in the wood that is quite intriguing in a discussion concerning the meaning of nature in Western culture, science and philosophy. He writes: “Wood” is an old name for forest. In the wood are paths that mostly wind along until they end quite suddenly in an impenetrable thicket. They are called “woodpaths”. Each goes its peculiar way, but in the same forest. Often it seems as though one were identical to another. Yet it only seems so. Woodcutters and foresters are familiar with these paths. They know what it means to be on a “woodpath” (Heidegger 1950/1993, p. 34). In the text Heidegger makes the term “Holz” (wood) synonymous to “Wald” (forest), where the materialistic and specific become equal to the general. We shall return to the hybrid meaning of language and etymology in the intriguing work of Heidegger when it comes to actual dwelling and building.

According to Heidegger the apparent dead-ends and cul-de-sacs (or “Holzwege”) of the forest tell us something about processes and procedures of thought and existence. The woodpath is the way we, in our everyday existence, appropriate events and situations that are out of our immediate control. According to Heidegger this counts as well for processes and procedures of more systemic character like for instance the rehearsal and performance of a symphony orchestra, or the practices of the scientist in the laboratory. We create meaning in retracing our actions and reflections on the path, and understanding comes through familiarity, practice and process.

In the Andersen tale the forest is the mediator of the heavenly sound, and we have to pass the forest (like the two youngsters) in order to truly understand the meaning of God and nature, becoming adults on our way. In Andersen’s tale we reach clarification,
overview and final insight through the crossing/passing of the forest, whereas Heidegger’s claim is that it is through the process of crossing, passing and walking in circles that understanding gradually grows. There is no final or absolute truth (the hill or mountaintop) about a phenomena, but an incremental insight into Being and Becoming through living and existing.

In both Andersen’s and Heidegger’s vision, the forest is gatekeeper of “truth” and a metaphysical representation on the essence of life itself.

Building upon stories, metaphors and holdings of a bygone past the threat of falling into escapism, conservatism and nostalgia is at hand, but it is the intent of the following to show that the procedural, open-ended and potent aspects of existential and phenomenological approaches can, through both critical and integrating attitudes toward technology (buildings), make a ‘clearing’ in the wilderness and allow meaningful and appropriate construction of thought and action that enframes concepts like: multiplicity, plurality, sustainability, nurture, care and concern. In order to reach this ‘clearing’ of concepts we shall deal with some central texts in the oeuvre of Martin Heidegger, wherein he metaphorically tries to trace the boundaries and possibilities of dwelling and building in relation to context.

“Building Dwelling Thinking” was originally a paper presentation at a conference held in Darmstadt in August 1951, and the text bears clear evidence of having a rhetoric and provocative line of communication addressed to the audience sitting in front of Heidegger. It was as well one of the first public appearances that Heidegger made after having been segregated and fallen into disgrace due to his ties and bonds to the Nazi-regime in the 1930’s. In the presentation Heidegger withholds original thoughts upon the importance of being, time and earth when it comes to building and dwelling. This means that he does not give in to the critique of contemporaries for what concerns similar Nazi dogmas upon concepts like ‘Blut und Erde’ (blood and earth) and the pitfall and danger of nationalism and obsolete stupidity of regionalism.
Heidegger is firm about the importance of being familiar with the ‘path’ and the existential ability to interact with the surroundings through technological artifacts like buildings.

The building is according to Heidegger a specific and primary way and mean of being-in-the-world. It is through building and dwelling that I am, you are and we are in the world, and we would not be if it were not for this ability to build and dwell. But building and dwelling is not a simple conjuncture of elements that forms a clear unified and general whole, which enables us to interact appropriately with the world, hence think; but rather a dynamic, multiple and complicated ‘gathering’ of entities and elements that in becoming a ‘thing’ undergoes physical transformation and change. It is in this process of walking the ‘path’ and becoming familiar with the ‘thing’ through everyday use that he the world discloses it self for us.

It is important on this occasion to clarify upon what a ‘thing’ is in a Heideggerian vocabulary, and furthermore to elaborate on current re-interpretations upon the potency of ‘things’ in relation to our dealing with the complexity of contemporary society. According to Heidegger a ‘thing’ is the opposite of an object and in placing this dichotomy he directly poses critique on the scientific strive toward objectification and neutral distance, and in relation to architecture he criticizes the de-contextualization and scientism of modernism. It is emblematic on this behalf that Heidegger never mentions the term architecture when it comes to the core essence of building, dwelling and ‘things’. Actually he is quite negative when it comes to architecture as a concept and term: “…the erecting of buildings cannot be understood adequately in terms of either architecture or engineering construction, nor in terms of mere combination of the two” (Heidegger 1971, p. 159). Heidegger is almost provocative as he addresses the (missing) potentials of architecture when it comes to set the rules and concepts for building and writes: “…thinking about building (which is integrated part of the process) does not presume to discover architectural ideas, let alone give rules for building” (Heidegger 1971, p. 145). (my bracket) It is in our construction and interaction with ‘things’ that they unveil there
existential being for us and become integrated part of us and our being-in-the-world, this is what constitutes to double movement of here and there, inwards and outwards that is present in all ‘things’ and becomes, in Heidegger’s terms, the ‘thingness’ of the ‘thing’.

A ‘thing’, as already mentioned, consists of four folds: earth, sky, immortals and mortals, and there is a connection and progression in between the folds. The earth that shows itself in the ‘thing’ both tied to matter (soil) and existing on the earth as a planet, which means governed by the rules of the earth like gravitation and the like. The sky is both the physical sky above our heads with what the sky beholds as physical entity and at the same time heaven and our metaphysical constructs in that meaning. The immortals or Gods are emphasizing the fact that a metaphysical and transcendental quality is present in the ‘thing’ as it shows itself for us, but at the same time the term points toward the divine as expression for beauty and grace, or perhaps even better toward Edmund Burke’s definition of the sublime. The mortals, which are the human beings on earth, under the sky and in contact with the gods, are intentional beings that measure themselves in relation to death and set boundaries for being in accordance to the relationship with the ‘thingness’ of ‘things’. We are not outside of the earth, the sky and the immortals, but interactive and integrated part of the whole. The critique of Heidegger in relation to 20th century scientism is that we have placed ourselves in this isolated and distanced position in relation to the other folds of the world and the ‘thing’, and hence become out of touch and out of tune with that very same world. The four folds in the ‘thing’ have further properties when it comes to how we interact with them through use and appropriation.

The earth as matter and planet we address through saving, nurturing and caring. The sky as sun, rain, wind and air, and heaven above we address by receiving and encountering. The immortals as deities or gods, and principle of the divine we address by patiently and peacefully awaiting and attending. The mortals, ourselves, we address by initiating, walking and progressing in time and space. The ‘thing’ gathers the four folds and it is in the gathering that meaning and understanding are and become.
Heidegger has been attacked and blamed for the transcendental and metaphysical, and scientifically inconsistent, way of dealing with reality and the world. And it is obvious that if we choose to see the world and reality as a rational, mathematical and geometric construct where everything can be measured and explained through scientific means then our vision is obscured and blurred by the introduction of immeasurable and illogical entities like our emotional directedness in situations as mortals and the metaphysical meaning and content of ‘things’ in their everyday life presence and use. But if we agree upon the fact that science and logics is not capable of explaining our doings, thinking, habits and preferences then the phenomenology of Heidegger could have a saying when it comes to appropriate settlement in relation to context, where the dwelling in nature becomes emblematic for this attitude.

Heidegger has also paradoxically been blamed for the simplicity of the four-folded ‘thing’, where the French anthropologist and philosopher Bruno Latour has introduced to the ‘thing’ as made out of a myriad of folds, because the context is characterized by immense multiplicity and plurality. The gathering in a thing, according to Latour, is interdependent with the context in which the gathering takes place, which means that the actual constructs will never be essentials or partake in constructions of ‘truth’, but rather show and tell something about the actual and the situational that can be analyzed through the ‘thing’s’ (actor/actant) part and role in different networks that also partake in the construction of the ‘thing’ (Latour and Weibel 2005). As I see it Latour’s critique of Heidegger’s original model, stretched out between four elements/folds/ poles, does not dissolve or eliminate the essential meaning of Heidegger’s ‘thing’. Latour’s multi-dimensional model upon the ‘thing’ is an elaboration and furthering of Heidegger’s intentions, and especially the moment where Latour begins to talk about how the scientific approach toward dealing with ‘matters of fact’ and the humanistic approach of dealing with the world as ‘matters of fairies’ as both being inadequate in relation to the problems we are facing as humanity, and on that behalf introducing the concept of ‘matters of concern’, then Heidegger’s original intentions for what concerns
saving, caring, nurturing and the necessary ‘turn’ becomes readily apparent.

The American philosopher of technology Don Ihde has raised another critique of Martin Heidegger’s essentialism when it comes to the ‘thing’, because restricting in relation to appropriation and use. Ihde has pointed out that we appropriate technology in variegated and multiple ways that on many occasions transcends the original intention of the technology. (Ihde 1990) A hammer can be used in many ways and for many purposes and not just for driving nails through pieces of wood, as can the dwelling in a specific context open up for variegated ways of living and being. Ihde has coined this condition as ‘intentional multistability’ where we as occasional users have intentions as we interact with ‘things’ and the interactions show as multiple and plural in stable settings. This means that we should be open for these intentions and for multiple stabilizations and make way, through our designs, for ‘intentional multistability’. One way of doing this is of course to facilitate, in the design-process, for interaction with various potential users and furthermore to follow and learn from how dwellings are actually inhabited and used the moment they become part of contextual reality. A learning example of this can be drawn from a report on housing in the 70’s made in the UK, where it is discussed how designers and architects had made the electronic infrastructure in a way that the TV set was supposed to be placed in the living room. (Lawson 2001/2007:221-222) The report showed that major part of the inhabitants of these allotments, through appropriation of the place, had drawn cables from the living room to the dining room in order to eat and watch television at the same time. “In reality, the residents were more likely to sit in easy chairs while eating their meals and watching television. Life for them was simply not functionally compartmentalized, and therefore not spatially zoned or planned. When asked (the architects) where they got there information from which they used to predict how the furniture would be arranged, nearly all the architects said they based it on their own experience or preference. Since architects have a highly developed sense of space in its formal sense, this does perhaps lead them to make what other people might regard as odd

The infrastructural solution delivered by designers/architects had not accounted for new tendencies in family life, where television became evermore central. Television was no longer a temporary leisure attached to the relaxation zone of the dwelling, but had initiated its travel toward omnipresence. Architectural solutions for what concerns dwelling are constantly met by these dynamic challenges for what concerns use and appropriation, and the case shows that we should, in our solutions, be aware of user’s ‘intentional multistability’ when it comes to design.

Further discussions on the meaning of dwelling

Dwelling and landscape/nature sets the two in different types of relationship when it comes to solutions for building and designing. The Romantic vision of the dwelling immersed in sublime and divine nature has been hailed in mainly European architecture, where the discursive formation of getting in touch with nature through preservation and conservation has dominated the field. The Holy Francis of Assisi has been utilized in this discussion as exemplary sample of how to interact with the environment and the creatures (plants and animals) of nature, to the point that Pope John Paul II nominated him saint of the environment in 1981. The cave and the simple pergola that Giotto and Bellini depicted as being the physical housing of Francis and his followers are to be inscribed in this discursive formation that has been going on since the beginning of the 13th century. The European Romantic escapism of the 19th century, which resulted in de-contextualized anachronisms in architecture, where ideals of bygone eras and styles were heralded in floral and ornamented planes and structures, has managed to survive the rationalistic and scientific attack of Modernism led by the original ideas of Marc-Antoine Laugier and the icons of early Modernism: Loos, Gropius, van der Rohe and Le Corbusier. In the rationalistic world-view nature is a standing resource, or a commodity, to be explored, exploited and utilized for optimization of material living and being. This shows in man made building and architecture within the ideological framework of capitalism and communism, which
both aims at an economic materialization of physical resources in which building and architecture partakes in the general program of domination and control of nature, wherein the body of the inhabitant is considered to be part of what is to be dominated and controlled. When the American scientists and novelist Rachel Carson wrote the *Silent Spring* in 1962 she opened the eyes of a generation that was to take up the Romantic world-view and oppose the utilitarian and rationalist usurpation of nature, and the environmental movements of the 60’s and the 70’s were, in their focus upon the catastrophes of human interaction with nature, discussing any type of human activity in relation to nature. In contemporary society the discursive formations of the environmental movements of the 60’s and 70’s have become paradigmatic and commoditized into behavior and habitus of the citizen and consumer, and in many ways the borders between man-made and nature have been blurred by this commodification of the Romantic world-view. We witness the same type of commodification when it comes to architecture and dwelling, where the ‘greening’ of knowledge and practice, through discursive formations on sustainability, has become mandatory when it comes to propositions for building.

The double meaning and motion of American pragmatism in the relationship between man-made and nature has to some extent characterized responsible construction in the US, where both preservation and transformation are present. The housing constructions of Frank Lloyd Wright is exemplary for this ‘hybrid imagination’ of architecture and design, where history, culture, nature and tectonics gathers in different contextual typologies, like for instance the Prairie houses from 1900-1920 and *Falling Water* (Jamison, Christensen and Botin 2011).

Dwelling and landscape/nature cannot be set into any meaningful discussion without touching upon the philosophical ideas of Martin Heidegger from the beginning of the 1950’s. The ideas of Heidegger gained power in the 1980’s through the written elaborations and interpretations of the Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schulz and all on a sudden Nordic architecture became almost synonymous with phenomenology: Asplund, Aalto, Peitilä, Fehn and Utzon,
were described and identified as phenomenological architects because all concerned with: “form-making....in response to site and inhabitation” (Sharr 2007:100). There is another reason why the ideas of Heidegger, from the 1950’s, gained power and importance from the 1980’s and onwards. The fierce attack of Heidegger upon the modern project guided by science and rationality met sympathy within the post-modern philosophical framework, where exactly the focus upon the ‘little stories’ and the individual lived experience had strong similarities with Heidegger’s definitions of the ‘thing’ and how we partake in construction of ‘things’ through everyday life practices and processes. The mistrust in the Western scientific and technological project of discovering the final explanatory theory upon the world and the universe is common to both Heidegger and post-modern philosophy, and Heidegger and postmodernity also set the subsequent belief in the force and reliability of mathematics and measurement in existential doubt.

We saw that the professional domain of architecture was met with suspicion by Heidegger and the way postmodernity has dealt with expertise and claims of expertise has affinities with Heidegger’s dismissal of scientific certainty. This has lead to the assumption that claims made by people that are partakers in situational and actual events have the same validity (and sometimes more) as distanced actors (scientists and researchers) claiming professional expertise, and to some extent this has been the pitfall of postmodernity and Heidegger’s thoughts. Mainly because opinions and actions made by non-professionals in highly complicated matters like for instance architecture have been granted the same validity as those made by responsible and emphatic professionals of ‘hybrid imagination’. Heidegger taught us that in order to act meaningfully on the ‘woodpath’ we should have in-depth knowledge of the forest, which means that we should be capable of reflecting upon our actions and possibly foresee the implications of our actions. This in-depth knowledge can only become through some sort professionalization, like for instance the wood-cutter or the forester, who by daily action and decision-making in the forest is the ‘virtuous expert’ of the domain. Translated into architecture it means that it is not the
occasional user of the forest that should be regarded when it comes to qualified action and decision-making, but the practitioner with in-depth knowledge of tools, materials, culture and history who in ‘gathering’ the elements and components produces appropriate solutions for planning and development in the forest.

It is obvious that the postmodern devaluation of expert-knowledge and the rather unfortunate metaphors used by Heidegger when it comes to modern technology and applied science has made way for national and regional populism where Heidegger’s description and analysis of the farmhouse in the Black Forest in Germany has become the iconic emblem. The very same discussion has opened the doors for vernacular building in relation to architecture, the latter being representative of theories, methods, rules and regulations, whereas the former has been read as creative, genuine, in touch with nature and culture of site, and unique, hence relational to core elements in phenomenology and postmodern creed in the uniqueness of the individual. This rather Romantic reading of the vernacular as representative of genius, gentry and poetry has occupied quite a lot in discursive formations upon building and dwelling in nature and landscape, and on many occasions Heidegger has been called the primary source for this Romantic reading of the vernacular. Referring to the metaphor of the ‘woodpath’ and quoting the dying lines of “Poetically, Man dwells” (1953) it becomes readily apparent that Heidegger meant otherwise in dealing with building in relation to dwelling and nature: “The statement, Man builds in that he dwells, has now been given its proper sense. Man does not dwell in that he merely establishes his stay on the earth, beneath the sky, by raising growing things and simultaneously raising buildings.

*Man is capable of such building only if he already builds in the sense of the poetic taking of measure. Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the measure for architecture, the structure of dwelling”*

*(Heidegger 1971, p. 227) (my italics)*

The making, *poiesis*, and the ‘know how’ stands as the cornerstone
in dwelling and building, which means that mere sheltering or site-dependent construction cannot be classified as dwelling in a Heideggerian sense, because neither has the ‘sense of the poetic taking measure’ as ‘leit-motif’.

Heidegger introduces in “Poetically, Man dwells” (1953) the concept of measurement, which in some ways can be compared to, or complement, Maurice Merleau Ponty’s and Hans Georg Gadamer’s scheme (skhema). We are used to classify both measurement and scheme as tools and representations of the scientific paradigm, where precision and accuracy framed in numbers and two-dimensional schemes are the essences of schematics of measurement. Merleau Ponty and Gadamer have different ideas on scheme, and trace the original meaning of the concept to the Greek schema, which can be translated to holding or standing.

Maurice Merleau Ponty introduces the reader to the concept of body skhema in one of the major works of phenomenology: Phenomenology of Perception (1945) wherein he emphasizes the importance of body as something more than a conglomeration of parts and bits.

In my reading of the concept it becomes a corporeal attitude, based on ethical and aesthetic considerations. This reading goes beyond the purely spatial meaning of aesthetics, i.e. sensing and experiencing, where relationships of our bodies with the outer-world are seen as either positional or situational, hence something that can be documented and described in a rather objective and schematic way, according to the conventional use of the term scheme. It implies that our bodies are entangled and involved with other bodies and things in the world, and we create corporeal meaning along the way, constantly becoming anew. (Merleau Ponty 1945/1994:42-44)

The body-skhema as attitude is a pre-noetical factor for creating a fluid and dynamic identity that comes before social ordering and construction. It is layered in our bodies, which are not entities detached from the mind, but determinant for conception and understanding. This means that our bodies have a capacity and potential that is innate (pre-noetical) and that it is activated as we are born into this world. The capacities and potentials are stimulated
and enhanced by the subjects and objects of our surroundings and our bodies become part of an ongoing process of metamorphosis and change. The basis of this ever-lasting social and technological construction of our bodies is our corporeal attitude towards stimuli, events, accidents, experiences and situations and this attitude (skhema) has both an aesthetic and ethical character.

Our bodies are in constant movement and according to Merleau Ponty we create from the very beginning of our existence a scheme for appropriation of our surroundings; we construct an attitude, a mode of perception, which is common to every human being although embodied within the individual subject. We seek patterns and try to order our presence in space and time, in blocks of past, presence and future. Entities of time are interrelated, overlapping and in the end make it so that we act and interact as human beings in both aesthetic and ethical ways. All of this occurs or becomes due to our body skhema, which is generated in the single individual; nevertheless, it is not subjective or unique because it is related and based upon bits and parts of our bodies that are common to every (normal) human being. And it goes the other way around, as well, which means that aesthetics, i.e. the way we perceive the world through our senses and bodies, is general and provides common meanings and understandings that can be structured, schematised and ordered, hence becoming scientific statements according to the traditions of Western science. The American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, in *Art as Experience* (1934), states that aesthetics ought to be placed in the core of everything, because it is the way our bodies relate to and understand the world. Hans Georg Gadamer was in agreement with Dewey about the potential of art as an epistemologically sound and valid way of understanding the world and reality, when he wrote: “In the experience of art there is present a fullness of meaning which belongs not only to its particular content or object but rather stands for the meaningful whole life” (Gadamer 1960/1992:63).

The body skhema is, as I see it, the mediator, which can be summarized in the following list:
1. General quality and capacity of the human body (aesthetics).
2. Common attitude and perception of the body (ethics).
3. Universal and cyclical perception of time and space, hence fusion of past, present and future (experienced physics).

Beside the fact of our bodies being schematic they constantly, in their number, volume and variety, confront and test the limits and borders of existence. And here as well it works the other way around: we, as bodies, are constantly tested and confronted by the limits and constraints of context. (Botin 2008:22-23)

The ‘body skhema’ approach can be transferred into architecture and Jeremy Till has in “Thick Time” (2000), where he evokes James Joyce’s Ulysses, tried to pose critique on the modernist approach: “Ulysses invokes a sense of time not as series of successive slices of instants, but as an expanded present. Thick Time. It is a present that gathers the past and pregnantly holds the future” (Till 2000)

Heidegger’s notion of ‘poetic measurement’ has strong affinities to Merleau Ponty’s and Gadamer’s skhema, because it is through our involvement and engagement with the world that understanding and meaning becomes. Heidegger is less reliant on the potentials of the body and trust in the potentials of language, hence poetry (making): “…poetry inevitably linked the making involved in every individual’s own building and dwelling to other acts of making through history, aligned ultimately with the creation of the world and its mythologies” (Sharr 2007:77). The individual’s own building has to be compared to other poetic unraveling in time and space, and this is what constitutes the measuring. We do not measure by the meter or by the rod, but by the folds in the ‘thing’, where a certain type of balance and harmony should be at stake the moment we consider: earth, sky, immortals and mortals. We should ask ourselves are we nurturing, receiving, attending and progressing through our interaction with the thing, because that is what constitutes the measure. “To Heidegger, when someone with poetic inclinations submits themselves to the world and deliberately or instinctively takes measure of its things and phenomena through creative acts,
she or he creates poetry themselves. For the philosopher, any outcome of this poetry also becomes a measure, added to a reservoir of human measures” (Sharr 2007, p. 82).

Dwelling is ‘poetic measurement’ by ‘body skhema’, which, by means of the hybridization of the two entities, is both general: human condition, historical, mythological and philosophical, and specific: personal engagement and imagination, individual experience and emotion, and context interdependent. To put it with Heidegger’s words: “Measure-taking gauges the between, which brings the two, heaven and earth, to one another. This measure taking has its own metron and thus its own metric. (Heidegger 1971, p. 221).

SUMMARY

In order to summarize upon this excursion into dwelling and landscape we can observe the following clusters of meaning, which have a saying when it comes to construction and building in relation to place. In a European context we witness how a strong Romantic verve has thrived since Francis of Assisi left his worldly goods and wandered into nature and became intimate part of a divine ‘locus’, i.e. nature. This approach has been characterized by individuality, isolation and hermetic meditation, where the austerity and simplicity of the man-made has been focused upon. On the other hand we have got a similar strong rationalistic and scientific approach to dwelling and nature, where man made structures and constructs have had the purpose of controlling and dominating nature using it as a standing resource for optimization. The constructs of Renaissance villas in the 16th century, like for instance Palladio’s later villas in the Veneto region in Italy, had this specific intent in relation to the surrounding rural landscape. Paradoxically we find that a similar formal reductive austerity and simplicity is present in the rationalist and modern interpretation of the relationship between man-made and nature, but the reduction is mathematical and physical based on theoretical and systematic approaches that transcends and surpasses the unfinished and imperfect project of nature. Art and
man-made controls and dominates nature, because of the latters incapacity of fulfilling its potentials.

The pragmatic American vision of the relationship is more dialectic although nature is considered in terms of human endeavor, where the human-built-world is paraphrased in the same way as nature. Technology is compared to nature, as nature is compared to technology and the whole is seen as a dynamic and transformative entity, where a certain degree of preservation is at hand. Frank Lloyd Wright has been pointed out as the iconic figure of this specific reading and it is the question whether the spirit that characterized the philosophy of Emerson, Thoreau, Pearce, Dewey and Mumford has maintained its strength in an American post-war context, where Big Science and Techno-science seems to have suppressed the role and importance of nature as meaningful player in discourses concerning human constructs. There is little evidence of pragmatism in post-war dwelling in relation to landscape/nature in any American context of major relevance and importance, and the rationalistic and de-contextualized seems have had the better in the latter part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

I have focused upon the potentials of phenomenology and post-phenomenological critique in relation to dwelling and how dwelling is interdependent with both the inhabitant and the context. Dwelling and building are intertwined and procedural in their interrelationship, and they interact simultaneously as we walk on the ‘woodpath’. We do not build in order to dwell, but measure poetically the context of which we are part, and thus already are in the phase of dwelling whilst we build. Our body scheme is the rod for measurement and this rod is characterized by a ‘hybrid imagination’ or ‘intentional multi-stability’ wherein a myriad of folds are gathered. The gathering of folds constitutes the ‘thing’, which seemingly can be seen as random and relative, but through \textit{skhema} and \textit{intentional being} we are capable of directing our actions in certain directions, hence making way for the concepts of concern, nurture, care and sustainability in our constructs.
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THE NATURE
OF DWELLING

chapter 09

The degenerate noun and the generative verb
seen through Anthony’s eyes

Roger Tyrrell
OF DWELLING

“We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are dwellers.”

(Heidegger 1975, p. 148)

At the core of human existence, and by implication architecture, is the primal need to dwell. For Heidegger dwelling was a poetic act; it is only we that hold the capacity to remove its poetic resonance. Furthermore, it is clear in Heidegger’s paradigm that the act of dwelling (the verb) sits ahead of the object of dwelling (the noun).

This chapter will suggest that much contemporary architecture has become obsessed with the object of its praxis, and, as a consequence, that the act (the verb) of architecture has been sacrificed at the high-altar of these objects (the nouns). In our increasingly homogenised, fluid, horizontal world, images are transported across space and time eroding a sense of particularity of place, climate and culture.

Furthermore, the chapter will suggest that an a-priori engagement with the verb and a re-balancing of the verb/noun relationship provides a route into the core of existence and indeed, a paradigm for mediating between existential and pragmatic components of being, and thus architecture. Implicit within such an ambition is the potential to reclaim ideas of particularity in counterpoint to the Universalist ambitions of globalisation.

“Being active confrontations and encounters, all basic architectural events have a verb-form rather than noun-form. Architecture is essentially an art of actions not forms.”

(Pallasmaa 2005, p. 319)

These ideas are developed from the writings of Juhani Pallasmaa, a constant source of inspiration. He has consistently interrogated that which occupies the core of architecture within our contemporary context.
At this point I will depart from postulation and move into the realm of observation. These ideas will be viewed through the lens of a child, perhaps allowing us access to the core of what we may post-intelectualise as architectural ambition, delivered via the simple act of engaging with embodied memory, in the process of making place.

OF ANTHONY

‘The roots of our understanding of architecture lie in our childhood, in our youth; they lie in our biography.’

(Zumthor 2006, p. 65)

Anthony (see p. 235), is the four-year-old nephew of my wife. He and his two sisters came to stay for a weekend and after two full days of laughter and adventures; he sat on the sofa and quietly asked me, ‘Uncle Roger, can we build a den?’ My reaction? Well of course we could. As an architect and teacher of architecture my ‘den-ness’ knew no bounds. However, as I soon learnt, Anthony (and not me) was in charge.

He began by surrounding himself on the sofa with cushions, building them higher until he had disappeared within. He had made refuge but it was unsatisfactory because he had lost all relation with that which surrounded him and I guessed, that was in someway threatening. How could he defend himself from his sisters, if he was unaware of their approach? Almost immediately the cushions were abandoned, scattered across the floor in frustration.

‘What else can we use Uncle Roger?’ he demanded. I suggested bath towels; we could hang them between sofa-back and dining table providing a roof. We did just that, and Anthony gathered his cushions and took them in under his roof…. giggling. Some cushions were seats, others became walls but he had, in the simplest possible
way defined dwelling as both refuge and prospect. Yet something was missing….. “Uncle Roger, will you be a Lion?” Happy to oblige, on all fours I prowled around roaring, which had the effect of making Anthony’s giggles uncontrollable. His ‘dwelling’ was complete; refuge, prospect and what I term reason; the reason why refuge and prospect are required. The reason to dwell became was the Lion.

Anthony was driven by the verb. The actuality and materiality of the object were secondary to his pursuit of the act dwelling. He made place from available material and space. What was clear to me was his innate desire to retreat, make place and in the sense that Heidegger would understand; to be.

“Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus bringing him into dwelling.”
(Heidegger 1975, p. 218)

Anthony dwelt poetically. Certainly his pragmatic needs were met. He had refuge and of course prospect and, albeit as an afterthought, reason. Here was a young man in control, holding a real sense of being, in the Heideggerian sense of that term. He had some control, territory and refuge, paradoxically in the most benign and invented context. He had through his act inhabited the verb and formed the noun.

With a real sense of humility I realise that Anthony taught me much that day. I had pontificated for years regarding the essence of architecture, intuitively having a sense of the importance of ‘the core’, yet not knowing how to articulate that intuition. In that afternoon, a four-year-old boy had exposed to me the essence of my subject.

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It was not that the noun was unimportant, but that it was the verb drove the making of noun. It became clear that the essence was delivered by the a-priori value of the verb informing the development of the noun. For Anthony, the issue was not the actuality of the material nature of the noun, but how, when focused upon the verb, the noun fell into place. It became clear to me that the issue was not verb v noun, but how they might conjoin…..poetically.

‘The dwelling is the theatre of our lives, where major dramas of birth and death, of procreation and recreation are played out, and, in which the succession of scenes of daily living are enacted, and re-enacted in the process of dwelling.’

(Oliver 2007, p. 17-18)

To rebalance the verb/noun relationship, I propose a grammatical shift in architectural discourse, from the current overwhelming preoccupation with the noun towards the fertile potential of the verb.

The noun objectivises architecture, and through the seductive image, anchors that objectivisation. As Pallasmaa suggests the image provides, a perceptual immediacy; but in semiotic terms, that immediacy is all too often, an empty sign. Our contemporary world is increasingly dominated by the power of the image and nowhere is that clearer that in architecture. Magazines, websites and TV set the image in front of us, providing a seemingly immediacy of understanding. Yet both literally and metaphorically, all those images are filtered through many lenses, each lens having a particular intent.

The sheer volume of such visual exposure ascribes an apparent absolute authority to the image, to the extent, where our desire to understand what informs what we see, evaporates. This encourages a level of superficial understanding that resides only within the image of the object and encourages ever more, again literally and metaphorically, retouching; in search of a perceived perfection.
This trend is of course a self-perpetuating mythology but, in turn, encourages a shift towards the superlative domain of architecture; biggest, tallest, longest…….. I saw this image in a gallery in Dubai. It is filled with ironic signifiers of the superlative condition. Yet, inhabited simultaneously by the hollowness and paucity of empty signs. (see p. 239)

‘Yet how are we to achieve this wholeness in architecture at a time when the divine, which once gave us meaning, and even reality itself seem to be dissolving in the endless flux of transitory signs and images.’

(Zumthor 2006, p. 32)

In contrast, part of the value of the verb is that it is indeterminate. It does not presume outcome in terms of object, merely acknowledges the desire to develop an object. It focuses upon process, act and being. The verb is, by definition, devoid of pre-determined architectural solutions, and invites speculation upon possibility, rather than prescribing outcomes.

The verb demands a response to the human condition and that in turn informs the development of the noun. With the verb we are forced to interrogate all that which sits in front of the noun, and is implicitly responsive to the diverse range of human needs, aspirations and potentials. To encourage the verb we need to develop points of resistance to the apparently absolute authority of the noun.

These points of resistance are provided through paradigmatic study of those who have in terms of theoretical positioning and/or the process of the synthesised design, clearly engaged with the potential of the verb. Immediately one would reference the Nordic spirit of Aalto, Fehn, and, of course Utzon in understanding such concepts and praxis. Outside of this geographical realm, designers such as Louis Kahn, Carlo Scarpa, Richard Leplastrier and Peter Zumthor and others describe through their praxis and writings clear speculation regarding the core of existence. Additionally the
LIVE

The tallest building of the planet

The closest building to the tallest building...
phenomenological agendas of Juhani Pallasmaa, and Stephen Holl represent a particular strand of engagement with the act of being. The philosophical strand (at least in modern history) reaches back to Heidegger with additional sediment and dimension supplied by Merleau-Ponty, Husserl and Sartre.

However, within the creative realm of architecture the verb/noun relationship should not be considered as linear but rather providing two points between which the creative act may oscillate. What is clear in the theoretical position and praxis of those defined as exemplars (above) is that this process of oscillation between the verb and noun results in sublime design solutions that resolve the ‘design problem’ at metaphysical and physical levels of existence.

As Anthony showed me, the inner construction of the act of dwelling holds an embodied resonance that connects us all at some primal level of our common, and perhaps universal, existence. Yet, as individuals our particular interpretations will be unique, predicated upon our particular experiences; what Zumthor describes as ‘our biography’. (see p. 241)

The potency of the verb encourages dialogue with act, being, and, what for want of a better term, we might call ‘the poetic’.

Albeit eventually expressed as a noun.

‘Postmodern life could be described as a state in which everything beyond our own personal biography seems vague, blurred and somehow unreal. The world is full of signs and information that stand for things that no one fully understands because they, too, turn out to be mere signs for other things. Yet the real thing remains hidden.’

(Zumthor 2006, p. 16)
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P. 241: Door detail, Marrakech Morocco – Tyrrell, R.