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Towards the Poetic

Noel Brady

Dublin Institute of Technology, noel.brady@dit.ie

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Towards the Poetic

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Cover image

*Between Silence and Light, John Lobelle, Samballa 1979,
p.43, Funery Towers, Valley of the Dead at Palmyra.*

Preface *to June 2012 edition*

The discourse in this thesis was originally submitted to the Department of Architecture in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree Master of Science in Architecture Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on 10 May 1989 as part of my SMArchS degree. My thesis supervisor was Professor Imre Halasz to whom I am particularly indebted. However important contributions were also made by Julian Beinart, Eric Dhluosch and Stanford Anderson. The material published in this edition is presented without any major edits apart from minor spelling and typographical errors. The photographs used in the original are not reproduced here but the citations are included if the reader wishes to follow the visual trail. It has been some time since the material was originally interrogated but has provided an impetus for many design investigations, some more successful than others.

Noel J Brady 30 June 2012

ABSTRACT

Born out of a concern for the world, this philosophy of artefact makes a case for a particular way of making. It is a search for things which mediate between ourselves and the earth. It is a search for those things which allow us to dwell, for things that anchor our belonging. It is a search for things which are formed from a principle which is a-cultural, a-historical, formed from something deep within us. Moreover it is an explanation; better still a belief about what we are about.

I am not going to talk about poetry or literature per se. I will be talking about poetry as the springing point from which I will talk about our works. I will look at the nature of things. The things we make mediate between the earth and ourselves in some way. In each things we make we can read our relationship to the earth, or non-relationship as the case may be in our present alienating world. These things gather the earth and ourselves together and make sense by our willing. For anything to be born into the void, the distance between us and the earth there must be an idea, a thought. We concretise those images in the thing, to be anchored and made real. In creating these things we have the power to bring to the thing values we consider worthwhile.

This essay will be a case for those values which allow belonging to occur, which makes dwelling possible.

To return to poetry, or rather the poetic let us look at language for a time. In ordinary language we use naming to make the world understandable and precise. We can begin to communicate reality through this naming. Thus language anchors our existence and is tied to the things by this act of naming. Poetry, however, transcends this connection. It brings about meaning through the juxtaposition of different things. It creates its meaning by association and by metaphor (translation), bringing it alive in another way. It becomes a thing in itself. It stands on its own, outside of ordinary language; it mediates between reality and us. It is not tied to a thing as a name is, rather it brings earth and humanity together, it mediates just as a thing does. It becomes a living thing in its own right revealing for us the earth and us to the earth.

And so to architecture that is truth; an architecture that echoes and mirrors reality, illuminates its existence and allows for dwelling. In a way this is a search for truth via the artefact. Dwelling depends on belonging which in turn depends on reality and our knowing of it, particularly as truth. I hope to show a way which lies beneath our false constructions to achieve that which has been elusive, a sense of belonging in order that I might find ground upon which I can truly build.

"... and I approach to such an exact correspondence between my aims and my powers, that I seem to myself to have made of my existence that was given me a sort of human handiwork.

By dint of constructing,' he put it with a smile, 'I truly believe that I have constructed myself.'"

Paul Valéry¹

¹ Paul Valéry, *Eupalinos, or The Architect*, p.166, Via 7, Princeton University Press

TOWARDS THE POETIC

Contents

Preface

PART ONE: A Philosophy of artefact

Introduction

A philosophy of Artefact

Artefact as Truth

PART TWO: A Sense of belonging

A need to dwell

Identification

Poetic dwelling

PART THREE: The poetic.

Introduction

Markings

Gathering

Forming

Invisibility

Metaphor, Meaning, Myth

Revealing

Objects of Desire

PART FOUR: Poetic things.

Introduction

The Woodland Chapel

The Shrines at Ise

Conclusion

PART FIVE: Final words.

Introduction

The Death of Symbol

Cycles of Thought

APPENDIX

Bibliography

Image

*Andre Kertesz, Pantheon 1986, p.20,
Mondrian's Studio, Paris 1926*

TOWARDS THE POETIC

PREFACE

Image

*Night Walk, Michael Kenna, Friends of Photography 1988,
p.11, High Tide Bournemouth, 1983.*

*"I have prepared my peace
With learned Italian things
And the proud stones of Greece,
Poet's imaginings."
W. B. Yeats²*

² W. B. Yeats, *The Tower* (1928), p.110, *Selected Poetry*, Pan Books 1974

Preface to May 1989 edition

I have attempted, by means of a search, identifying the poetic (a somewhat elusive term) as a goal, to try to establish a position to work from in relation to the artefact, things made by man. It is, as a result, a theory about the production of things. But as Valéry explains "... a theory acquires value only through its logical and experimental developments."³, the value of this will only become clear when the lessons learned are brought into the actual world.

The artefacts which I deal with are architectural in nature because it is the domain from which is I begin this search. There have been many ideas and theories of and about architecture. In the following there is an attempt to account for other artefacts also. There is only one matter worthy of our attention and that is our existence on this earth, our reality which at times is incomprehensible. Our struggle with this has yielded our most profound expressions of our humanity. Though some think that architecture can explain the world it perhaps merely describes it. Even when it comes to describing reality, the earth, the solar system and the universe and especially our existence we are poverty stricken. In the face of the void all we can do is talk into the dark and hope for our words to draw forth an echo into the light.

Every time we make a mark or construct things we send out a hopeful voice, a spaceship into the vacuum. This bringing to light is our ultimate human responsibility. The manufacturing of certain things which harbour this hope of an echo are the things I wish to illuminate. It is a search for the origin of making, of poesis and with that a return to our own age and re-establish this tradition.

Rilke warns us that the things depend on us for their keeping.⁴ The things we make are more fragile than those of the earth. In making them our values are earthed, our thoughts anchored. Should our values change then the things perish. They provide a place where we may talk into the void. This is a search for those values which have the same constancy as the earth, the a-cultural, a-historical and universal which one might call truth. In the poetic we find resonances which make for truth. It is a way of expressing, which by other means is ineffable.

Such a path to truth is philosophical by definition. Poetry's close relationship to philosophy has been dealt with by better minds than mine, to avoid the need to delve into that subject in detail.⁵

In trying to describe those things which are better experienced in place I have used photographs which in some way may give a glimpse at the thing, but are not meant to nor are they capable of standing for reality.

This search is, I believe, necessary, nay essential to our being. We are poverty stricken by our own hand, our poor thoughts, our poor words, our poor language which has fallen into a sophisticated disuse, disuse by overuse, inappropriate use and specialised use. I shall ask forgiveness if I should fall into the same traps.

Since I am not an etymologist, archaeologist, sociologist or expert in any of the following, history, criticism, theory, poetry or philosophy, the reader will have to forgive my forays into those fields to aid in my explanation.

³ Paul Valéry, *The Method of Leonardo*, p.86, *An Anthology*, Bollingen series XLV©A, Princeton, 1977

⁴ Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Ninth Elegy*, *Duino Elegies*, 1923

⁵ See the work of Martin Heidegger and Hans Georg Gadamer



What I wish to measure is the infinite, the immeasurable, not by any empirical meter but by the poetic meter. Only the poem can bring together the disparate elements of earth and world into a fitting relationship. It is that relationship which needs to be illuminated.

We will go to the heart of the thing, its inner secret to discover the root of poesis, of creation; the poetic act. It is there, a place which exists between thought and archetype, where we will dwell for a time. Because of the poetic we have a way of uncovering, revealing the earth. In that process the artefact becomes invisible, receding into the background as a greater unity is born, the unity of man and earth. I will show that

Asplund's Woodland

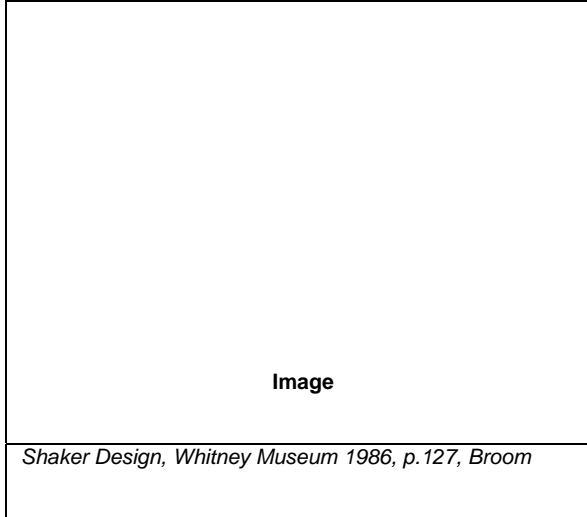
Chapel, Sweden and the Ise Shrines, Japan, along with others, are of the same condition, the constant, the absolute as Corbusier tells us. Truly it is the sounding board by which all things are measured. What we chose to measure here is the infinite and the immeasurable.

*"Only if we know that the thing which truly matters is the infinite can we avoid fixing our interest upon futilities, and upon all kinds of goals which are not of real importance."*⁶ Carl Gustav Jung

⁶ Carl Gustav Jung

TOWARDS THE POETIC
PART ONE

A PHILOSOPHY OF ARTIFACT



"I'm talking about union of yourself with what the world is made of, or union of yourself with other people, or union of yourself and things."⁷

Christopher Alexander

⁷ Christopher Alexander, *Beyond Humanism* (interview), *Journal of Architectural Education*, p. 22

Image

Edouard Munch, The Scream

Introduction

We live in a destitute time where chasms have opened between what we hold to be true and be truth itself. Our language has split apart from the meanings it held leaving us awkward in our attempts to describe our experiences or to help in understanding our existence. We have insufficient ways of explaining newer senses of being. Our words carry so little weight that we are struck dumb in the face of our own reality. We have even seen "the death of charming words" and their replacement by "abstractions of inferior quality" which endanger the "integrity of the mind".⁸ How are we to keep our things if we cannot keep our words? The dialogue between man and the earth is rapidly becoming an oratory on how to live rather than continuing to questioning the way we live.

To begin any form of conversation there must be a willingness to listen as well as speak. When one speaks when one does not listen, if one is preparing to speak then one is not preparing to listen, if one is silent with no thoughts of speaking then one might listen. To understand there must be some foundation for speech, for meaning. It may be necessary to strip the words back to their origin, their original meaning, if we can continue without the burden of sedimentary years. In speaking, our words must be intelligible not only in that they must be recognisable when they are returned to us, but durable also for the journey they must take into the void to return as an echo. Recognition and durability are essential. We must recognise the words we use, they must be durable to be able to step into the void and return to be recognised once more. Only when we receive an echo can we tell whether or not there is anything there in the darkness of the void.

⁸ See Paul Valéry, *The Necessity of Poetry, The Art of Poetry*, Bollingen Series, XLV©7, Princeton 1985

When poetry and philosophy draw things from the incomprehensible which excite resonances within us we recognise the basis of truth. We recognise the symmetry of word and echo. In truth we discover what we already knew.⁹

On being born into the world, man is essentially alone. His experiences and understanding are his alone. His conscience is his. Though he may share many things and many ideas every man is an island. We are linked by many bridges, the relationships we forge in the world. Alone man stands, facing a void. Revelation by whatsoever means is a personal matter. Though we are islands we do in fact share certain experiences, certain revelations and thus certain truths.

When consciousness dawned for the first time the distance between what was thought to be known and that which was unknown was crossed by filling in the gaps with inventions of sorts. We have continued to fill the void. Man's dream is to uncover or place an order on reality that it might be controlled, understood or made sense of. Between what is known and unknown, the void is capable of receiving many meanings and many orders. These orders, theories, beliefs, thoughts are constructed to allow for, identification, a sense of belonging, an anchoring of the soul lest it fly into the darkness of oblivion. Because of this gods were imagined, religions created and a science manufactured, to give man's existence meaning. These ideologies fight for a place in which they alone make most sense. This could be explained as the giving or making of ground, a place in which to stand, from which to act. Ground and place are central needs of man, without either he is lost.

⁹ See the Meno dialogue, Plato

There are no people on this planet without their myths, their religions, their orders or ideologies. Man's existence would be meaningless but for these things, these constructed thoughts. But these things have often pushed us away from the earth, distracting our thoughts.

This is an attempt to establish a path towards meaning by means of the artefact, to reinforce man's existence, confirming his being, a search for meaning in its most direct form, by facing reality, not merely the perceived reality but one which lies beneath our gaze, beneath our touch, beyond naming. It is an idea which seeks to find its roots in the actual earth. The manner in which this is done is necessarily philosophical for it involves a search, a path towards truth. This search has led me to the archetype and further to the place of its birth. It has sought and glimpsed the primary reason to answer the question in what manner we should create?

Most searches of this nature have led people to order, a perceived order of nature, of the universe, of man etc..¹⁰ This has subsequently led many to imitate nature, the cosmos or man through the built thing, especially architecture. These searches often leave out parts of the complete picture. Order is neither found, nor is unearthed as one might unearth a fossil. Order is placed upon the seamless reality of the interwoven fabric of existence. One cannot deny the existence of type or character in the natural world but the ordering of things into bracketed domains deny their continued evolution. Perhaps we can only be truly certain of those things for which we ourselves are responsible, for as long as we remain truthful.

¹⁰ These orders have changed constantly as we develop better tools of measurement and logic. Though recent thoughts on the subject suggest that the measurement actually affects the subject matter. There are many macro orders that can be ascertained quite readily; number of planets, elliptical orbits etc., but a larger number of patterns, such as the growth of plants and the formation of geological formations has required the development of new mathematics to explain what had been thought as simple geometry. See fractal geometry.

This thesis is an attempt to establish a foundation which will ensure that our artifacts help us make sense of the world, to cultivate a sense of belonging. It also asks that we become responsible for all things. Attempting to face reality is the basis of this search and as Lampugnani relates, is our most difficult task.

*"But in actual fact, only the conscientious, relentless and courageous battle with reality can unveil its 'incomprehensible basis' and open up a path towards a poetic experience which is deeply moving beyond any mere aestheticism."*¹¹ Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani

To "move beyond any mere aestheticism" we must travel beyond the literal, beyond the perceptions deep into the things themselves to see our gaze reflected, for once. Beneath the layers of superfluity that we must mine our path. Once we set foot on that path a new world opens up still further, "the closer you approach, the more there is to see; the more you know, the more mysteries there are".¹² Architecture and the making of artefacts touch our lives, our 'ineffable' experience. Deep inside there are places which cannot be touched by the crude measurements of society.

*"Poetry, being an art, should have quite different aims: to express an experience which is essentially ineffable; using language to express muteness. In contrast to prose writers, poets are engaged in subverting their own instrument and seeking to pass beyond it."*¹³ Susan Sontag

¹¹ Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, *The Incomprehensible Basis of Reality*, essay on the architect Josef Paul Kleihues, p.86, A+U, October 1986

¹² Alberto Giacometti, quoted in essay by Israel Shenker, *A Stubborn Quest for Reality*, Smithsonian Magazine

¹³ Susan Sontag, *The Aesthetics of Silence*, p.203, *A Susan Sontag Reader*, Vintage Books, 1983

*"The word spoken in such a concrete and pragmatic context does not simply stand for itself: in fact, it does not `stand' at all, but on the contrary passes over into what is said...The language of poetry and philosophy on the other hand can stand by itself, bearing its own authority in the detached text that articulates it."*¹⁴

Hans Georg Gadamer

*"What is important is learning to live in the speaking of language. To do so, we need to examine constantly whether and to what extent we are capable of what genuinely belongs to responding: anticipation in reserve."*¹⁵

Martin Heidegger

¹⁴ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Philosophy and Poetry*, p.132, *The relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays*. Cambridge University Press 1986

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Language*, p. 210, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper and Row, 1975



Image

Nouvelles Imagás, Wily Ronis, Nude Provence 1949

A philosophy of artefact

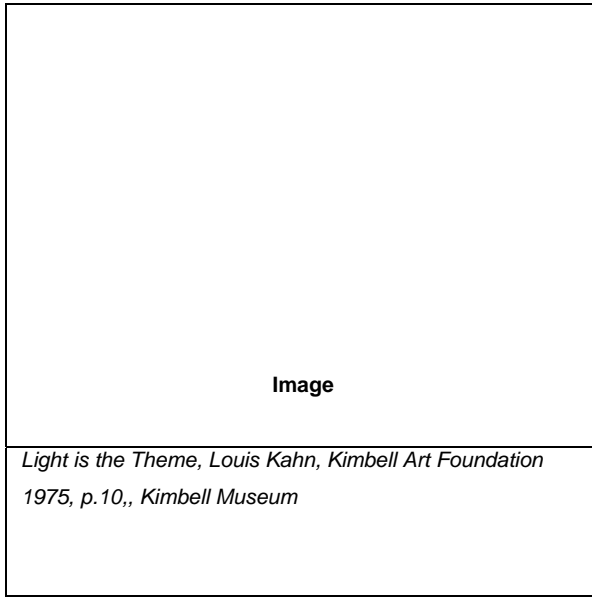
In each act we are offered a multitude of choices. To act without a thought, thoughtlessness, leads to insensitive or inappropriate action, often to useless things, if not ignoble ends. To decide from amongst those choices we must think carefully and deeply. A philosophy of artefact is necessary not only to find those things we have lost but to find a way of making meaningful things in which we will find ourselves. Thus T.S. Eliot is right when he says that "the end of all our exploring will be to arrive at where we started and know the place as if for the first time".

Louis Kahn struggled for a lifetime to seek the origin, the place from which both the archetype springs. His search led him to search for origins in orders, institutions and materials. Much of his work remains primitive¹⁶ because of this. His central tenant was that one should determine what a thing wants to be. Whether it be an institution, building or material. This requires thought, it's true, but more importantly it requires an openness, to listen, to look, towards the thing itself, in order for it to reveal itself, its essence. This is the dialogue that I spoke about above. If we are to dwell on this earth we need to enter into a critical dialogue with its nature, so that our nature might be pictured therein.

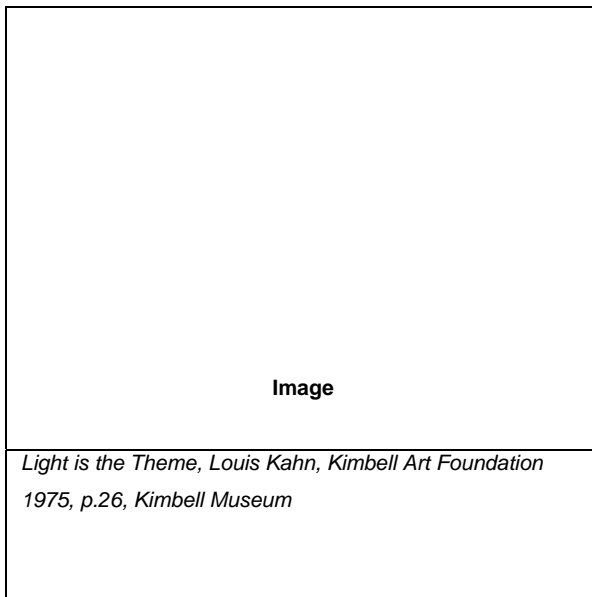
In order to see beneath the surface of perception one must be prepared to see what is there and not what is perceived to be there. In 'The Method of Leonardo', Paul Valéry warns us against the retention of a thought which stifles the mind, "assumes the characteristics of hypnosis and is called....in the domain of art and poetic construction, it becomes a sterile monotony".¹⁷

¹⁶ I use primitive in the truest sense; of being close to the origin. Crude is not a word I would associate with primitive. Many modern artists sought a new beginning in primitivism, but nowhere could one say that their work is crude. The iconographic work of Henry Moore and Alberto Giacometti show best this relationship.

¹⁷ Paul Valéry, *The Method of Leonardo*, p.46, Paul Valéry, *An Anthology*, Bolligen Series, Princeton, 1977



In Kimbell, Louis Kahn sought the very essence of the vault united to the essence of light. The dialogue between world and earth is made concrete in the making of the thing.



Too often we hold on to thoughts that restrict our minds. This occurs because we refuse to listen to the echoes that return from the void. Our specialisation is just such a condition which allows only the smallest aspect to be seen and being captivated by such the whole is never experienced.

*"When the eye is not set on any one leaf, and you face the tree with nothing at all in mind, any number of leaves are visible to the eye without limit. But is a single leaf holds the eye, it will be as if the remaining leaves were not there."*¹⁸

Takuan Soho

Only from the place where the thing is opened to us and we to it, can there be a realization, as Kahn has said;

*"Realization is the merging of Thought and Feeling at the closest rapport of the mind with the Psyche, the source of what a thing wants to be."*¹⁹

Louis Kahn

There between thought and action from whence the archetype is born, is where we find man's conscience. The psyche (will) is the source of all made things, according to Kahn says, and a life of no action intolerable.

*"Said the young architect: "To live and make nothing is intolerable. The dream has in it the will to be and the desire to express this will."*²⁰

Louis Kahn

¹⁸ Takuan Soho, p.22, *The Unfettered Mind*, Kodansha International, 1987. Takuan Soho was Zen monk, calligrapher, painter, poet, gardener and tea master. In the mid-17th century he wrote a series of essays directed towards the Samurai Class in which he sought to unify the spirit of Zen with the spirit of the sword. In his work there is perhaps an answer to Hamlet's question; "...`The Clear Sound of Jewels,' deals with the fundamental nature of the human being, with how a swordsman, daimyo or any other person, for that matter can know the difference between what is right and what is mere selfishness, and can understand the basic question of knowing when and how to die". Quote taken from the introduction to the above volume, p.15. Translation by William Scott Wilson.

¹⁹ Louis Kahn, *Beginnings*, p.69

²⁰ Louis Kahn, *Beginnings*, p. 69

Realisation is the creative act, poesis, it is the thought constructed. Dalibor Vesely tells us that "like any other art, architecture is a representation of human praxis and not a representation of nature or ideas."²¹ But human praxis includes our relationship to nature. In addition we develop ideas about everything even human praxis. Though not necessarily representing nature, architecture includes both nature and ideas about the earth. Realisation is bringing this representation into being.

All men's actions are products of their wills, the things we make are our thoughts, our dreams constructed, and they are imbued with our very spirit. Thoughts, dreams, prayers are of the same parenthood, they exist in the space which is born of our dialogue with the earth, in the place which has been prepared by question and bounded by answer, for true dialogue is giving as well as receiving.

The "will to the conceivability of all being",²² calls us forth but with what spirit. Hamlet was left pondering the question, "To be or not to be" while his conscience decided his faith. He was as much a product of his fears as he was of his desires, something he could not resolve. In Kahn as in Nietzsche we find the respect for the 'will to be' or the 'will to the conceivability of all being'. Being has priority over all. Being is the key; it is at the heart of the matter. In Kahn's words we see his insistence that material is one of his primary sources of inspiration; the use of a material, such as stone or brick, in a manner which is of its own nature, true to its sense of being. In man he searches for the institutions which speak of his eternal and universal nature.

²¹ Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture and the Poetics of Representation*, p. 35, Daidalos

²² Frederick Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Of Self Overcoming*, p.136, Penguin Books 1987

He sought to envelop these ideas in material form which in their own right were archetypal. However, these manufactured, constructed things cannot will themselves into form. That is man's task. It is his will that guides. And his guide must be true should he wish as Kahn has wished, true to the 'conceivability of all being'. The material itself is mute, it cannot tell us what its essence is, or its secret. It is something which is unearthed by use, revealed by use. How we use something and the respect we offer to it tells of our own souls. In everything we do we betray ourselves. We cannot help avoid doing so.

Kahn uses material in a way that allows it to speak to us, he gives material voice, but it is his voice, he talks to us through his use of material and place. His buildings speak of his dialogue with the earth. The artefact, spoon, chair, aeroplane, house, church, city, it does not matter which, holds the key to our values and our relationship to the earth.

Once the hierarchy of the city saw the temple, faith, as the most important place, coexisting with the town square, the public image. The city speaks of the relationships of people to government, to church, to the earth and to each other. Now that god is dead²³, and the town square is populated by merchants, commerce has risen to the highest position we see a different story written on the ground. The city has been, particularly in recent times the will of the few over the larger population and as such from narrow thoughts we have constructed virtual prisons to man's soul and his will to be. The city today has enveloped the nearby earth to such a degree that it is smothered in its expansion. The city today denies the earth's existence. It is the place of the monologue.

²³ Reference to Nietzsche's statement describing the new world



We are never truly separated from the earth, no matter how much we deny its existence. Everything we do is placed on the earth, surrounded and supported by it.

Accepting what we are is essential to any growth, essential to understanding. It is understanding that which we already have around us that we find knowledge. True knowing is the illumination of things that have always been. Illumination brings the unknown into the light, uncovering what has always been known but forgotten, or lost. Carl Jung placed that as our ultimate responsibility, the illumination of the earth for others. That is the poet's only occupation, any other is a mere masquerade. In his essay 'The Spiritual Problem of Modern man', Jung said that "great innovations never come from above; they come invariably from below..."²⁴ as if to say that the light will not be given to us, it is already there, it is we who have to bring ourselves into the light. Our paths must bring us into the light. For those who make the climb, it is often a hard, tortuous and lonely path. They need to offer their hand to aid those that will follow. It is the poets who climb the lonely path, who will take the lead.

The task of any philosophical path is to lead the way bridging gaps, those distances between what is truly known and that which is forgotten. The facades of shallow thought and belief we have comforted around us shield us against the cold of the utter desolation of the void. The void, the possible meaningless of existence is a horror few will dare face. But in facing it with the confidence that is inherent in our actual existence we may find comfort in our own being. Our being should confirm the earth and the earth our being. Without this we lose all sense of belonging. When we look into the void we look into a mirror of our own souls. In that gaze we will recognise the essential, the ultimate reality, the ultimate truth.

²⁴ Carl Jung, The Spiritual Problem of Man, p.471, The Portable Jung, Penguin Books 1988

"Listen," my father said. "She is discovering that which is essential." But I was a child, and craven. "Perhaps she is suffering," I answered him, "and perhaps she's frightened too." "No," my father said, "she has passed beyond suffering and fear. Those are diseases of the cattle pen, meet for the groundling herd. She is discovering the truth."²⁵

Antoine de Saint Exupéry

In illuminating what is essential, those things which are either useless or nonessential will become known. Things, in this case artefacts, stand or mediate between us and the world. All things are meaningful to a greater or lesser extent. The difficulty in reading art pales against any reading of our artefacts. Intentions in art are at least clear and can be decoded to some extent. In approaching an artefact we become archaeologists. Instead of soil, we have to sift through the layers of meaning, double meaning and interpretations which abound.

Alongside this search is the obvious illumination of an idea, a thought, a belief. So this thesis is about the way in which we inform the artefact, the qualities which we allocate to the thing and the value we bring into the world, born of our hands. Artefacts which allow us to dwell, help us to face the abyss with resolution. For this to occur, by our hands, the artefact must stand as truth.

²⁵ Antoine de Saint Exupéry, p.9. *The Wisdom of the Sands (Citadelle)*, University of Chicago Press, 1979. The boy was taken pillion by his father to the desert where a woman to be punished was tied to a stake and left to die in the sun. The dialogue quoted is their witnessing of this fact.



In art its meaning can be ascertained if one is willing to `talk' with it. When faced with a machine such as a computer there is little that will be recognisable to us, little that is present to awaken a response, or forgotten knowledge.

Artefact as Truth

Things mediate, without further assistance or interference from other ordering systems, between us and the earth, however the things we make require support from concepts outside of their being. These things have no value on their own but are made valuable by a culture. When the culture changes the things relationship to the world changes. These things are not constant. They are not capable of standing as truth. They have use only insofar as society dictates it. When Kahn said that order is he was saying more than a mere affirmation. Order, to his mind was being. Being determined order from which everything is born. Before the industrial revolution the things we made formed a direct link to the earth, its land, its produce, its people. The artefacts were born out of the existence of the people, their being. The craftsman transcended the tools he used, to bring from the material that which was close to his original thought. The tool itself left its mark, evidence of its nature, of its being, but nothing more. Its existence was not be justified in terms other than its usefulness. The tool did not exist for mere aesthetic reasons.

For an artefact to be truth, not merely representative but essentially truth itself it requires an opening, in which it must make its home. This opening involves our participation without which everything is lost. The opening is the resolution between earth and world. Set into the clearing which results from this meeting, the thing is unconcealed in the open.²⁶

²⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art, Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper and Row, 1975

Truth and the setting forth of the earth in the open is essential to our belonging on the planet. Without truth our whole basis of existence lies on false ground. The things we make help place our world in relation to the earth. To stand apart from the earth and refuse to participate in clearing a place which harbours truth we deny the possibilities of our being.

"The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through the world. But the relation between world and earth does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another." ²⁷

Martin Heidegger

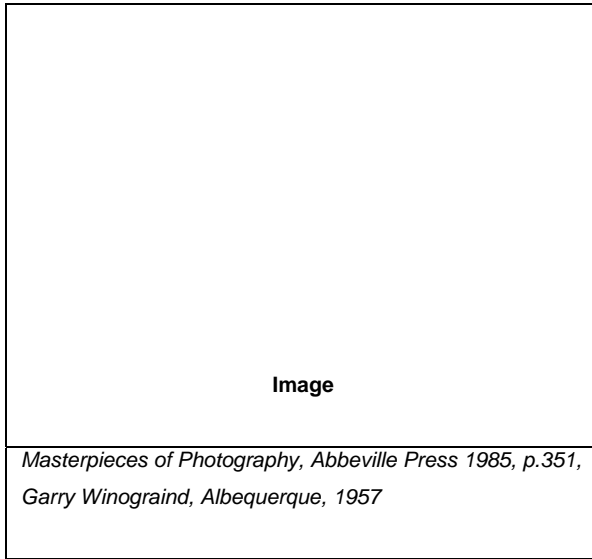
Rather than a resolution by the polarity of opposites the world and earth meet as a gradation of events, which resolve themselves according to their being. Thus our participation in the affairs of the planet are measured in the way the earth responds to the world we set forth. Participation does not necessarily define interference.

Ignoring the earth while reaping its benefits is to create interference, to touch it but shun its response is antithetic to participation. There is no truth without participation in the clearing. The thing stands as truth and as such confirms reality, confirms our being, it directs our gaze elsewhere. We do not see the tree alone, but the earth in which it is rooted, the sky to which it reaches, the sun from which it gains life and the wind which until the tree was born was invisible. The thing makes the invisible relationships visible. The thing becomes a mirror in which we see reality as if for the first time. How often has the earth, city or place been revealed to us by of its reflection in water?

²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, p.49, Poetry, Language, Thought, Harper and Row, 1975

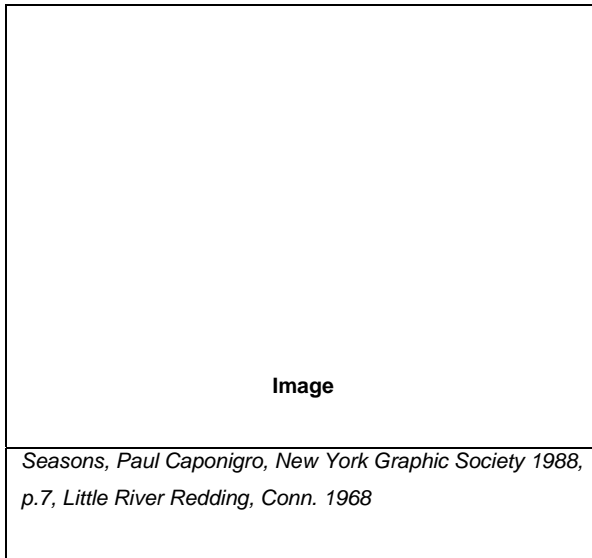
When Narcissus looked to the reflection in the water he saw not only reality but was captured by it His gaze was not open to the earth, he saw what he wished to see, a beauty unsurpassed in the world. This gaze returned is what we should fear when we send our voice into the void. If we were to make things (mirrors) which returned merely our image we would be captured there also, like a sterile thought. The tool mirrors our deep and active participation in the earth, setting forth our world while the earth responds, the setting forth of truth. An artefact which merely reflects our vanity, our weaknesses, our greed is useless when placed against the earth. Having no use other than to return the gaze produces nothing more than an empty vessel in which nobody can share its contents. Leonardo Da Vinci advised artists to view their work in a mirror to see it as if with new eyes so that they may appreciate something which had always been in front of their eyes. Perhaps that is the clearest analogy which can be applied to what is being attempted here. He also warned that when an artist paints or sculpts a figure, to be careful not to include the characteristic structure and makeup of the artist's own body. He too was fully aware of the danger of the mirror.

Today the things we make capture our eyes, they do not allow our gaze elsewhere. They bind our souls. We have become obsessed with the artefact's aesthetics, its surface condition. There we see ourselves in the things we amass around us. We sit surrounded by mirrors of ourselves in a museum of useless things. We can thus comfortably screen out much of the man's condition in a destitute time, in a world dedicated to the consumption of useless things, which support our vanity or status.



Often there is no resolution between the world and earth leaving only the fine line of alienation. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, the desert sun draws a fine line between man and desert with a hint of death.

By virtue of the still and constant water can the river reflect the forest, otherwise the ripples disturb the surface of the mirror.



By refusing to accept our condition, to accept the earth we face the possibility of strangling ourselves with our own umbilical cord. With our denial we destroy the possibility of dwelling in its proper sense.

For an artefact to have this aspect it must aspire to being a thing, being as such, truth as such. This thingness is a naturalness, of being, at one with the earth and the world. It must be set in the open, the between, where the coming together of earth and world is resolved.

*"From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear, both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being."²⁸*
William Wordsworth

In this eloquent passage from Tintern Abbey written in 1798, Wordsworth places his soul amongst nature, to be guarded by her. His location is within or on 'this green earth'. The oneness of the earth is seen as the ultimate meter, something to be attained, to be at peace with, and to rest within. The thing sought is a certain sense of completeness that allows, in a deep sense, existence, a full existence. It has a certain individuality; in that it has a character of its own while being related, interconnected to the other things which form the world.

In the same way that a tree has character and individuality, yet can never be separated from the environment in which it truly belongs.

²⁸ William Wordsworth, Tintern Abbey lines 105©111, p.104, The Selected Poetry and Prose of Wordsworth, New American Library 1980

If we could make things which would be accepted as this then we might complete a poem and as Le Corbusier relates there may come a moment when every man makes one poem.²⁹

It is by our occupations that we are known by what we do makes up a great part of what we are. We do not merely relate to the rest of the planet by size, shape or colour of skin. To do so would be discriminatory and shallow. To know the true value of a person we must go beneath the skin and search out their truth, their essence, their secret. Our actions denote our being. It is the visible part of our souls. Our actions lead the eye elsewhere to other things. We know people by what they do and not by what they say. Our actions are our mirror, as are the artefacts born from those acts. Our acts are also what unites us, makes us brethren, sisters under the skin. When we act as a community or as some group we identify with a broader concept of humanity. Thus we have activities are universal and the things born out of them are universal also. The individual is linked to the communal, the ancient to the modern. If our lives are lead along narrow selfish paths then this aspect of belonging to humanity is lost.

²⁹ See Le Corbusier, p. 263, *Towards (a new) Architecture*, Dover Books 1986. In the text he refers to the building of a house, or home as man making a poem.

TOWARDS THE POETIC
PART TWO

A SENSE OF BELONGING

Image

*Masterpieces of Photography, Abbeville Press 1985, p.335, Wynn
Bullock, Child in the Forest, 1951*

"May a man look up
From the utter hardship of his life
And say: Let me also be
Like these? Yes. As long as kindness lasts,
Pure, within his heart, he may gladly measure himself
Against the divine. Is God unknown?
Is he manifest as the sky? This I tend
To believe. Such is man's measure.
Well deserving, yet poetically
Man dwells on this earth. But the shadow
Of the starry night is no more pure, if I may say so,
Than man, said to be the image of God.
Is there measure on earth? There is
None. No created world ever hindered
The course of thunder."³⁰
Friedrich Hölderlin

³⁰ Friedrich Hölderlin, In lovely blue, p.249, Hymns and Fragments, Princeton University Press, 1984. It is this poem which is central to Heidegger's canon particularly in his essay "...Poetically Man Dwells ..."

A Need to Dwell

Dwelling presumes a condition other than or above that of mere survival. The word itself indicates a certain value or condition of existence. To dwell somewhere means to rest, to sink roots, to attach values to things. We aspire to dwell in the heart of someone in much the same manner that we aspire to dwell in the heart of a country. It is thus; rightly attached to the buildings we would have as our homes. Hölderlin confirms man's existence when he says; "Well deserving, yet poetically/ Man dwells on this earth."³¹ For man's dwelling on 'this earth' is more than birth, eating, sleeping, procreation and death. He has created worlds from his existential experiences; he has created artefacts which bridge the earth³² and the world³³. He has established truth and meaning by virtue of these bridges. It is the poem that is our most profound tool in this task. In Heidegger's essay "...Poetically Man dwells ..."³⁴ Hölderlin's poem is subject to the philosophers scrutiny only to flower into something new, the idea illuminated. He establishes Hölderlin and the poem as bearers of truth. He establishes the nature of dwelling also;

*"When Hölderlin speaks of dwelling, he has before his eyes the basic character of human existence."*³⁵

Martin Heidegger

and more importantly the poetic act, or poesis, poetic creation;

*"Poetic creation, which lets us dwell, is a kind of building."*³⁶

³¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, 'In lovely Blue'.

³² Earth; the planet on which we live and all things and beings on, in and under it, its totality.

³³ World; the totality of all things created by man, on this earth.

³⁴ See Martin Heidegger, p. 211, Poetry, Language, Thought, Harper and Row, 1975

³⁵ Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p.213, "...Poetically man Dwells ..." Harper and Row, 1975

³⁶ Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p.213, "...Poetically man Dwells ..." Harper and Row, 1975

What can be said of this building? This building can be used to explain the way in which we construct ourselves, our relationships. Valéry definition of emotion to which the poetic gives rise, "...that all possible objects of the ordinary world, external or internal, beings, events, feelings and actions, while keeping their usual appearance, are suddenly placed in an indefinable but wonderfully fitting relationship with the modes of our general sensibility"³⁷ makes it clear that the very act of dwelling itself is essentially poetic and that building is a fitting together, or gathering of things. We gather around us 'all possible objects' and place them into a 'wonderfully fitting relationship(s)'.

Without the bridge, the poetic, to link us to the earth our conscious lives would be ones of utter desolation. We would lead a fragmentary and disjointed life. The many aspects of our lives would remain unrelated, a chaotic jumble of things. It would be difficult to make sense of anything. These relationships are anything but aesthetic, they require a deeper level at which these things connected. Their binding need to be durable, recognisable also, like the words we send to the void.

The attempts in recent years to establish a meaningful environment has arisen out a deep seated need within man to replace god, to establish a more secure science, in other words, to replace the fear of the unknown, to ground himself once more on the earth. However the response has in places produced only a shallow interpretation of traditional environments in search for a sense of permanence.

³⁷ Paul Valéry, Poetry and Abstract Thought, p.59, The Art of Poetry, Bollingen Series XLV©7, Princeton 1985

Shakespeare's 'all the world's a stage' was never meant to be taken literally as an artificially bounded place with two dimensional facades instead of buildings which enveloped life. It was meant to indicate that the world was a place for action where choices were to be made. Our environments have changed at a much faster rate than at any time in the past. The insecurities that plague the modern world find expression in our cities. Many have sought out the perceived security of the past, an illusionary idea at best.

However meaning is not dependant on form. The world is not a place for avoiding issues or avoiding existence. A stage set cannot function as a place of dwelling, as an envelope for existence when it supports only an actor's performance. In the narrowest sense an actor is one who follows lines drawn up by another. The actor is never in control of his/her destiny; it has been mapped out before his entrance. His path is inevitable, just like the lives of our citizens when defined by the narrow stage set of our modern cities. Drawn to his inevitable destiny Hamlet cannot stand outside of the play to recognise the nature of the play. He is destined to follow the tragic path to the end. It is this which makes tragedy and comedy so alike, in that the proponents are sorrowful or funny in that they never resolve the events that oppose them in their lives. Tragedy and comedy are essentially chasms between sensibilities that may never be resolved, as in Hamlet's case. If we become actors in a play defined by others we will cease to write our own histories but live other, invented ones. To find a way of truly dwelling we must look to something more constant than any idea about the past. In order to dwell we must search the essential characteristics of dwelling.

It is in our language that we find evidence of this dwelling as in our homes. In the word there is evidence of reality, of the earth. In fact words are very much of the earth, but language; the use of words in a particular manner, is poetic, linking the earth to our experience, our being. Heidegger tells us that it is the first poetry. It is tied to our very being.

"In any case, language belongs to the closest neighbourhood of man's being. We encounter language everywhere."³⁸

Martin Heidegger

Words communicate reality; poetic language makes it meaningful for us. The earth is tied to our being by the word, and our language brings into alignment. Sometimes this alignment is anthropomorphic in character, witnessed when we speak of 'the head of the river', 'the foot of the mountain', the foothills, the headland, etc. We make concrete our existence among things, beside them, inside of them, above or under them, it makes concrete our dwelling, amongst the things of reality, the things with which we share the bounded realm of the earth. It does so by means of the poetic. It brings together all the features of our existence; it brings them both near and into our personal domain. Taken further Heidegger aligns poetry with 'measure taking', "which gauges the between, which brings the two, heaven and earth, to one another."³⁹, not only heaven and earth but man and earth as well. This gauging is by necessity a bridging, a placing of foundations in both banks of the river. It establishes by definition a place for being.

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Language*, p. 189, Poetry Language, Thought, Harper and Rowe, 1975

³⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p.221, "...Poetically man Dwells ..." Harper and Row, 1975

In poetry we find something of man and something of the earth. When they have been conjoined something greater than the parts is created, something other than the earth or man stands in their place. There is a unity of being, a unity of place, where all things are united, where a sense grows, a sense of true belonging. Such is the poem, the poetic.

*"Thus the bridge does not come first to a location to stand in it; rather, a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge. The bridge is a thing; it gathers the fourfold."*⁴⁰

Martin Heidegger

Only in this bringing together can there be true belonging, a true alignment with things constant and permanence not dependant on formal patterns, but on true being. The thing establishes the measure, the distance bridged, and the link between.

In order to dwell, there must be some provision to allow for dwelling to take place. "A place must be cleared or freed for settlement and lodging."; Raum in other words, the forerunner for our word room. Room is not defined therefore as mere space but a place which has been cleared or prepared for dwelling, just as one would say 'to make a bed' in place of; preparing a bed for sleep. We do not live in bareness on the earth; we establish a nest, or environment in which we find shelter and comfort. And it is in the thing itself we find the clue to this clearing, or making place for. A thing makes place for some relationship between man and the earth. Only the sense of belonging brought about by poetic construction is capable of the bridging of man and earth.

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p.154, Building Dwelling Thinking, Harper and Row, 1975

Image

*Night Walk, Michael Kenna, Friends of Photography 1988, p.7,
Deck Chairs, Bournemouth, 1983*

Without a bridge the distance between the earth and man will be left untouched, a desert difficult to cross.
We may be left alone on a distant shore of ignorance.

Our poetic artefacts can become thing like and gather the world and earth into a wonderfully fitting relationship. Above I said that the poem leads you away from itself. It can clear a space or bound a place where another thing may enter and begin to dwell to begin its presencing. The object of the poetic is to clear a place where man might dwell. A place where the earth makes its presence felt also.

"A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek peras. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that which something begins its presencing."⁴¹

Martin Heidegger

A Greek example of place making, of this clearing, making available for habitation, is the Acropolis. The inhabitants which were to dwell there were gods. It was a sacred place. There the hill was formed, made level to accept building. Even in its decayed state it retains the essential features of its being.

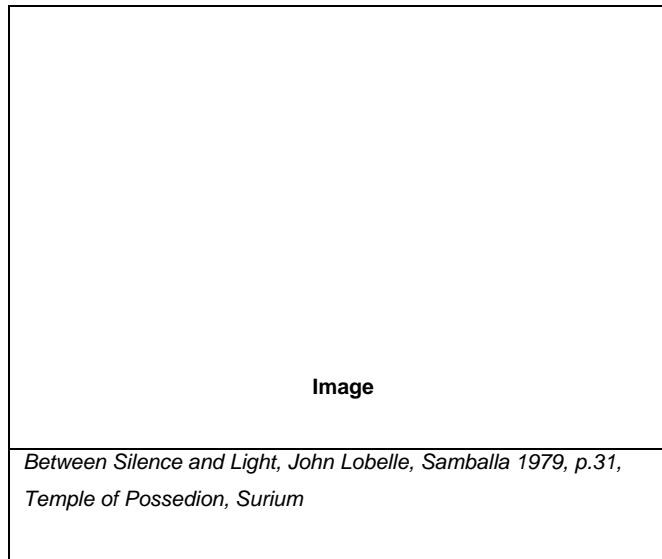
The precinct is defined by the sheer walls of rock. Beyond that edge is the sea, the mountains, the earth. The boundary does not limit but allows for a beginning. Within the boundary the various temples and holy buildings bound a place for man at the centre of the complex. The different boundaries overlap to form thresholds of many levels.

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, p.154, Building Dwelling Thinking, Harper and Row, 1975

Mountains have always been the homes of the gods. It is a universal archetype occurring in many places on the earth. To mediate between god and man temples were often built at a place in between, in the foothills, on a nearby hill or smaller mountain. Over and over again one rediscovers the archetypal notion of the upper, middle and lower kingdoms, heaven, earth and hell. The temple stood in the place between, in the foothills, hardly ever on the crown of the highest place. There the `peras' would be a shared place, of gods and men. In a place such as the Acropolis the temple precinct begins or ends its presencing at the edge of the sheer walls. What presencing takes place after that is immeasurable. On one side man stands, on the other stands the earth. From the bounded place of the Acropolis you are immediately linked to the horizon, to earth via the sea and mountains. Your eye completes the otherwise empty place. The sea was an important source of wealth and food for the ancient Greeks who once had one the greatest sailing fleets in the Mediterranean.

The act of clearing allowed dwelling to occur which respected what was immeasurable by meter but measurable by the poetic. In this case the things which were put into the place, into the open between the earth and man, allowing for our gaze to be directed to the immeasurable. We live where our gaze lingers. Hölderlin describes it succinctly when he says, "...he will gladly measure himself/ Against the divine. Is God unknown?/ Is he manifest as the sky? This I tend/ To believe. Such is man's measure."⁴²

⁴² Friedrich Hölderlin, In lovely blue, p.249, Hymns and Fragments, Princeton University Press, 1984



The temple allowed for the presencing to occur of god and man, sacred and profane in a wonderfully fitting composition which spoke of the resolution of earth and world at the points of their meeting. Like the meeting of old friends their touch is gradual and sensitive.

This confirms our dwelling, our reality, our being. We know where we are. On the Acropolis we live with the mountains, the sea, the gods and ourselves. It is a complete conception, a unity of thought,⁴³ clarity and truth. These things, Parthenon, Erecthium, Propylea and Temple of Nike, form the poetic gesture, the gauging of the distance in a way appropriate to the immense scale involved. Reality is unified in a single moment, man to this earth, for there is only one earth.

The cliff like walls are not the end of dwelling but the beginning of the place of dwelling, likewise it is the beginning of the presence of the earth. We could say that the boundary is the threshold of internalised being and externalised being. Architecture is a catalyst in the relationship between our internalised being and our externalised being which results in our bounded places. It is the place which is formed which makes for our dwelling. Architecture is not the goal, but without it place making is impossible. The boundary is the resting place where one waits before venturing forth into the landscape, it is a true threshold. It is these thresholds of humanity that speak of our continuous dwelling on this earth.

On the Acropolis, it is only when one arrives at its centre that one can sense this. You do not see the fullness of the landscape, nor sense the completeness of it all until you have been brought to the centre place. When you are amongst the things themselves you understand the precision of the place which unfolds to your eyes, your mind. There the earth is linked to the place via the horizon. There you can sense your being among things unified on the earth, with the earth.

⁴³ See Le Corbusier's description of the Acropolis in *Towards a New Architecture*, Dover Publications.

"The Greeks on the Acropolis set up temples which are animated by a single thought, drawing around them the desolate landscape and gathering it into the composition. Thus on every point of the horizon, the thought is single."⁴⁴

Le Corbusier

"The distance one can see is a personal definition of the horizon. The observed landscape is an inflection of the eye, a view selected from nature. A point of view favours one place rather than another."⁴⁵

Sverre Fehn

The Acropolis is just so, one place rather than another, one particular place indeed. It can never be repeated. Its precise relationship to the landscape, even in its ruinous state is complete. Its ruinous state is such that it bonds more emphatically to the earth. The sense of place made by the things is so powerful that it still resonates from within its residual skeleton. It achieves a unity of purpose and composition. Nothing more could be taken or given to make it more complete. It awakens in us our primal relationship to the earth, revealing our true heritage.

In our cities today we have lost the horizon, we have lost that unity. Our places are no longer where the earth makes its presence felt. Our belonging is removed from the earth, our experiences fragmented. Most cities today have established a world onto themselves where the earth is missing. The city as an artefact no longer stands in the open as truth. The city today stands more as a monument to property rights, rental agreements and greed. It stands because of these scaffolds.

⁴⁴ Le Corbusier, *Towards a (New) Architecture*, p. 204, Dover Publications, 1986

⁴⁵ Sverre Fehn, *The Thought of Construction*, p. 32, Rizzoli 1983

The city has become a world where the earth is no longer present. The earth is imitated in the form of parks and tree planting. No longer is the city perceived of a thing in nature but as nature captured within the thing. Rising above the earth, it expresses a will of man, prevalent since the industrial revolution, to dominate and control the earth. The earth being merely represented has a defined existence. No longer able to grow according to its own will, its own being, it is constructed, pruned and manipulated. The larger parks of major cities such as Hyde Park, London and Central Park, New York owe their existence to an idea of quantity over authenticity.

In today's cities when something invades from the outside, the earth, such as the cloud in Andre Kertesz photograph 'New York 1937' we sense something of the poetic, but not because of the things themselves but the distance between the manufactured and the natural. The cloud appears to have wandered uncertain into the domain of the city, the world where it is not allowed. The things of the city, skyscrapers and the like, though expressions of our present culture, do not direct our gaze to the sky, or the earth. Neither do the low rise sprawl of other cities which depend on fast moving transport systems which focus our eyes on narrow but life threatening concerns.

Clouds stray into New York every now and then but because our gaze is not directed to the sky we never sense their presence, worse still, know their existence. Thus living where our eyes linger places us only in respect of the machine, never the earth. The lack of the poetic in the things made there is compensated by the energy of the people's own poetry, a raw and humane poetry, providing a life belt for a destitute time.

Image

*Andre Kertesz, Photographer, Museum of Modern Art 1964, p.44,
Lost Cloud, New York, 1937*

The thin line between man and earth that expresses the alienation of our times.

We must cast away our perceptual eyes if we are to begin to see reality. The loss of unity in the modern city, the 'fall of the horizon'⁴⁶ is something to regret. Have we become so frightened of the gaze from new horizons that we cannot live there, "thus conscience does make cowards of us all".⁴⁷

Man dreams of order, from which he might be able to anchor what is essential; the miracle and odds against chance of, existence. Man has forever searched for ideas which would help him construct such a world that unifies, that takes away our fears and protects our fragility. However his insistence on finding or manufacturing an order has left only the order, the gridded city and the Mercator grid. What was a datum from which to grow to help locate man on the earth in his travels has become the very straitjacket in which he suffocates. As with things we have travelled far from the original intent, subverting its real values with other less noble ones.

The grid which used to denote a certain unity of purpose has merely become a divisive tool, separating and parcelling interests across the globe. There was a unity of purpose when the city was still an artefact, a thing of its own making which stood between man's world and that of the earth. Cities have become too large to conceive of the place in the same manner. Our belonging to a place depends on its unity. There are many cities today which are divided according to religion, class, politics and other arbitrary thoughts. There is a need to dwell, to be at rest in these places more than ever.

The Acropolis had been completed some odd forty years before the birth of Aristotle in 384 B.C. leading one to think that he had this place in mind when he wrote the following;

⁴⁶ See Sverre Fehn, 'The Thought of Construction', Rizzoli 1983

⁴⁷ William Shakespeare, Hamlet Act II, Sc I.

*"Therefore, just as in the other representational arts a single representation is of a single [thing], so too the plot, since it is a representation of an action, ought to represent a single action, and a whole one at that; and its parts (the incidents) ought to be constructed that, when some part is transposed or removed, the whole is disrupted and disturbed."*⁴⁸

Aristotle

Christian Norberg@Schulz had this to say about it;

*"The timeless value of the Athenian Acropolis consists in its symbolization of human society as a reconciliation of nature and man. Here man knows himself without losing his reverence for the earth on which he lives: he has come to know himself because of a deep understanding of his position in the natural surroundings."*⁴⁹

The need for dwelling is a need for unity, for completeness, for being a thing in itself, set forth by the world on the earth. It is foremost a place where we come to know ourselves. We often talk of completeness in our lives, when we realise the sense of belonging to a place. When the earth opens up for us we experience a sense of being that is profound which cannot be equalled by another. This opening, this truth that has ventured into the world is where we stand, sometimes, when we know that we truly stand on the earth, when we become conscious of the earth pushing back against us as we set forth our world.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, Poetics, p. 11©12, translated by Richard Janko, Hackett Publishing 1987

⁴⁹ Christian Norberg@Schulz, p. 68, Meaning in Western Architecture, Praeger Publishers, 1975

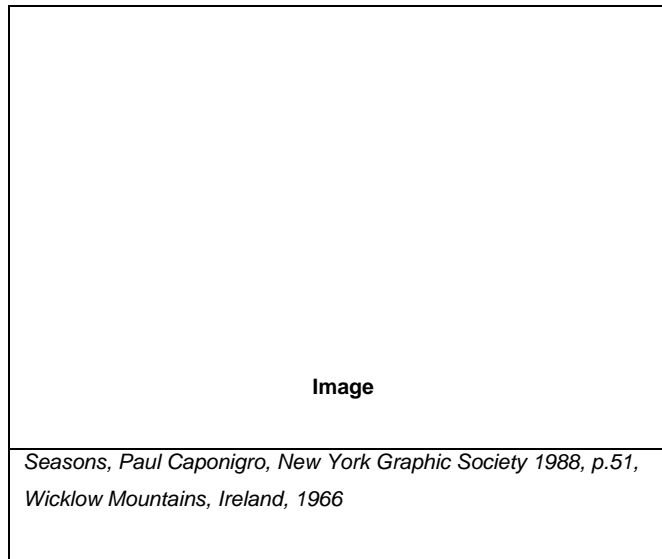
This opening up is avidly described by the writer Tarjei Vesaas.

"The woods open up before him. His life is revealed to him....This evening he experiences things as they really are: a great kinship. He has grown up out of slopes and valleys and hidden, seeping water. He is himself a fruit of this landscape. A child. This evening his senses are open like a bowl."⁵⁰

However lest we forget our focus on what brings us to these realisations, let us return to the thing. The tool of the forester is his axe. It brings him in direct contact with the reality of the forest, every time he swings and connects to a tree. Knut clears a path from the forest, he clears a place, allows the sky to enter in, all by virtue of his act, facilitated by the axe. By virtue of the axe he realises his touch upon the world and more importantly its touch also. It is the clearing that results from his actions. His unified intentions that caused the clearing to be, he has made a place in which to dwell, a place bounded by the forest, out of nothing, creation. This act is shared by many. In similar circumstances mankind clears a place for humanity to dwell. By their activities man becomes communal.

The thing, which is formed, formed by art but more essentially by man; the artefact, is at the heart of his existence. In this case the axe is one and eventually the house will be another when built in the clearing, things which stand at the resolution of the earth and man. The role of the artefact is therefore, clearing a place, of emptying it, is to make it suitable for dwelling.

⁵⁰ Tarjei Vesaas, Last Man Home, p. 102, 105©107, Vindane (The Winds), Oslo 1952. This translation from Tarjei Vesaas by Kenneth G. Chapman, Twayne Publishers, 1970. Last Man Home is the short story used by Christian Norberg Schulz in his introduction to The Concept of Dwelling in establishing the trust of his own thesis.



The forest is our archetypal home, where our first experiences make for our dwelling today.
From the forest the necessary material for survival is gathered.



The forest is home to the forester who prepares material for the fire, the shelter and a clearing into which
mankind can enter into a dialogue with the earth.

The role of jug making could be seen as making place for the dwelling of wine or water. Likewise of ship building which can be viewed as the making of place for sailors to survey the oceans, which in truth means the emptying or displacement of water to make room for a dwelling on the sea. Whatever we do, we prepare a place so that dwelling may occur. Lao Tzu had this to say about making;

"Knead clay in order to make a vessel. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the vessel. Cut out doors and windows in order to make a room. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have the use of the room."⁵¹

The intent therefore is an act of clearing, making room for, which is made concrete by virtue of the thing created, so out of nothing comes the thing. If a place is not cleared or prepared it is unlikely that man could reach his full potential.

When man is removed from the act of clearing he loses his closest bond to the earth. The placing of the hand on the tool which linked man to earth is limited mainly to those who have retained an agrarian and/or craft tradition. When the issue of agrarian and craft production became nothing more than part of an equation relating efficiency to mass consumption, because of the industrial revolution, the first ties to the earth were severed. The people were moved from the land to the factory. When the first factory was opened man's link to the earth was subdued in favour of his link to the world.

⁵¹ Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Book One, XI, p.67, Penguin Books 1983

Though the ground had been set in the medieval guilds it was in the industrial heartland of England that the cyclical processes of a world onto itself began; a mirror to face a mirror. It is interesting to note that the first major advancements were in threshing and weaving. The former saw the world intercede on behalf of nature, bringing about sister technologies in the husbandry of animals and other food production. The latter saw the weaving of screens to cover either the body or the home. Until then rich, ornate costumes was restricted to the higher classes. The mass production of new fabrics allowed a newer form of clothing to evolve, and soon after the idea of fashion as a force onto itself. It is telling that the first advances necessary for the invention of the computer were made in the new looms which were invented in the industrial heartland of England.⁵² Because of these things image is given greater status than content, seen in the rise of romantic concepts in landscaping where the image of the landscape hid a virtual artificial construct, and in the availability of more exotic fabrics and the invention of new fibres. Virtually all of the major developments on which our present information and image culture are based can be found to have originated in the weaving mills of England's 'dark satanic mills'. Since then industry has succeeded in weaving a new texture to our existence on this earth.

This weaving has literally placed a carpet over the earth which has prevented man from placing his feet on the earth. The looking glass has not released its grip. Alice's flight through the looking glass is nothing more than a flight within herself, a fantasy of her own creation.

⁵² See Babbage's mule, In 1834 Charles Babbage patented the analytical engine which included concepts such as programming and taping. In France, Jacquard de Vaucanson, developed a loom which could be patterned by a 'punch card' system. Back in England around 1785 Edmund Cartwright developed the power driven loom, setting the actual pattern of industrial production which has changed little in the intervening years.

Such is the world of Narcissus that we find ourselves, amongst objects of desire. Such desire has led us away from the earth. Thus we are surrounded by objects of desire, in truth useless things. The image is the primary force in our society. It has taken the place of thought and of poetry. The image is more powerful than the word, at least which is what we are made to believe. The image is a mere facsimile of reality and does not necessarily require our participation.

In order to sustain the consumer society more useless things have had to be created in order to fulfil the need for novelty encouraged by the industrial process and to keep the giant alive. Since there is no natural demand for the things made, market places have been created and people encouraged into thinking that they need more of these artefacts. These useless things populate the globe with greater success than man.

In reaction to the industrial onslaught the arts and crafts movement in England, as well as Germany, America and other places sought to re-establish a life more in keeping to living on the earth. The Shaker movement was a direct response to the industrial life in England. Later the artists, architects and craftsmen of the Bauhaus understood the impending dangers of the industrial child. There's was, however, an effort which accepted the potential of the machine even after the horrors it facilitated during World war I. Out of that dark time the hope and idealism of the modernists sprung forth. White replaced the ochre, khaki and brown of camouflage which was developed in the war. The rise of movements such as futurism and purism denoted the desire to find the beneficial aspects of the machine.

But as we have learned the machine was, especially in the hands of the unskilled, heartless. Because of the machine unskilled workers number more than the skilled. The machine itself has meant the death of craft, the death of touch and will mean the death of humanity in the manufacture of the artefact, when we fully robotise the factory. This can be the only conclusion since man has always been treated as a part of the machine since the factory was conceived. Our relation to the machine needs to be addressed if we are to regain contact with the earth. If we continue to set the city up as a world without the earth then we will sacrifice our souls to the machine. The need to dwell cannot be seen more emphatically than on the factory floor. We have constructed our own prisons. We alone are responsible.

In our cities today the ancient arts of making are sadly lacking. Places have not been prepared. The emptiness has been filled, making life unintelligible, as if someone filled the spaces between the notes and phrases of great music, transforming it into mere noise. The relationships between notes and phrases which constitute music are missing from our lives. We built the city to be at rest but everything that the city, today, is founded on the principle that 'time is money'. Filling the emptiness with shallow things is even more intolerable than making nothing. We have built an architecture of screens which offers us a paradox. These screened environments offer us the illusion of the real by its palpability only to be cheated by its cinematic condition. We have buildings today which purport to be 'modern' while being clothed in older costumes. These buildings become more aligned to the idea of image than that of thought.

Such buildings remain shallow being derived from what a building is supposed to look like rather, as Kahn has said, what it wants to be. The question might be posed in relation to the Lloyds Headquarters by Richard Rogers; does such an institution really want to be a form of engineering superstructure,⁵³ or does it want to be something else. It is the image that remains the strongest generator, the image of high technology especially when it sacrifices common sense in favour of effect. The Lloyd's building⁵⁴ is symptomatic of another trend in the production of architecture, in that one can live and work in the late twentieth century while comforted by the illusion of historicity, giving a mere image of continuity and permanence.⁵⁵ In truth these are all staged environments in which a new play has been performed since the industrial revolution. Since then we have constantly strived for ways to sugar the pill, the benefits (to some) of industrialisation on one hand while having to accept dehumanising and/or alienating environments on the other. Illusion, the seduction of the image, it seems, is more powerful than reality. However the competitive illusions of the modern city, its cinematic projections interfere with each other increasing our confusion. Unfortunately there are architects, though they may be intelligent and skilful who understand the position in which we find ourselves, have made use of irony in their buildings, playing out the joke. The sad laughter of a destitute culture can be heard when one visits the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart by James Stirling or the Folies in Parc de la Vilette by Bernard Tschumi.

⁵³ References have been made to this building as to its similarity to an oil drilling platform or a chemical production facility.

⁵⁴ I refer to the Lloyd's building here in the way in which the engineering aspects of the construction dominate aligning it more to the age of Brunel and the other engineers of Victorian England, than to the age in which we live.

⁵⁵ See Richmond Riverside development, London, by Quinlan Terry which uses a staged version of a Georgian Town behind which lies a speculative office and housing scheme. This merely sugars the pill.

Image

Noel J. Brady, Lloyds, London, 1986

*"From Socrates on, there are countless witnesses to the value of irony for the private individual: as a complex, serious method of seeking and holding one's truth, and as a means of saving one's sanity. But as irony becomes the good taste of what is, after all, an essential collective activity the making of art it may prove less serviceable."*⁵⁶

Susan Sontag

The competing messages are never clarified. Man becomes little more than an extended member of the cast, an extra, as the movie world calls them.⁵⁷ As an 'extra' man can be placed where and however the planner decries. An active and critical participation is required of all if true dwelling is to occur.

The industrial process is antithetic to participation. It lives on the laws of averages. The statistical method is its creed. By definition humanity is treated thus as probabilities rather than possibilities. Dwelling is about possibilities, 'the conceivability of all being' as Nietzsche put it.⁵⁸

The many mechanised implements that crowd our home are useful to some but they also aid in the control and subjugation of man's will to be, of his creative sense and more over restrict his access to the clearing. I would call these things useless, because in light of man's being they are of no use to him, they offer nothing but a narrow field of action and little in the realm of possibility. They ignore the depth of the city, the depth of man, the ultimate depth of the earth. This work places masks between man and the earth.

⁵⁶ Susan Sontag, *The Aesthetics of Silence*, p 204, *A Susan Sontag Reader*, Vintage 1983.

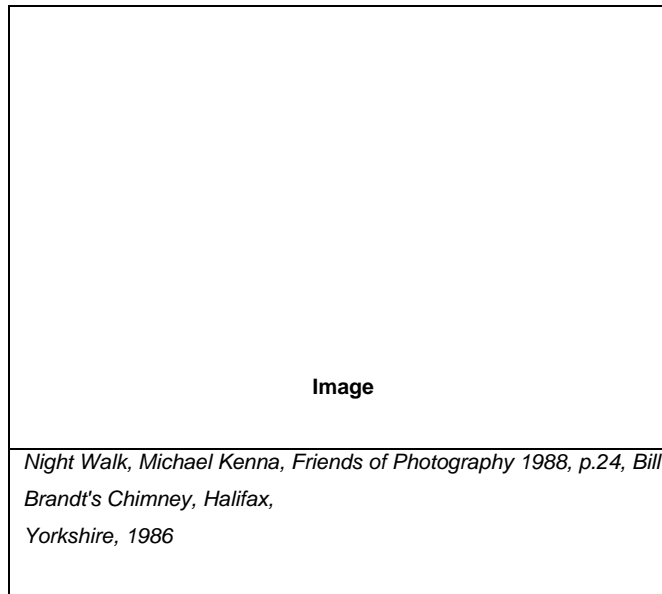
⁵⁷ An extra means a non essential member of the film cast who is used for 'crowd' scenes and other fill-in roles to support the star, the highest image. Even the term extra sums up the relationship of citizen to place maker.

⁵⁸ Frederick Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *On Self Overcoming*.

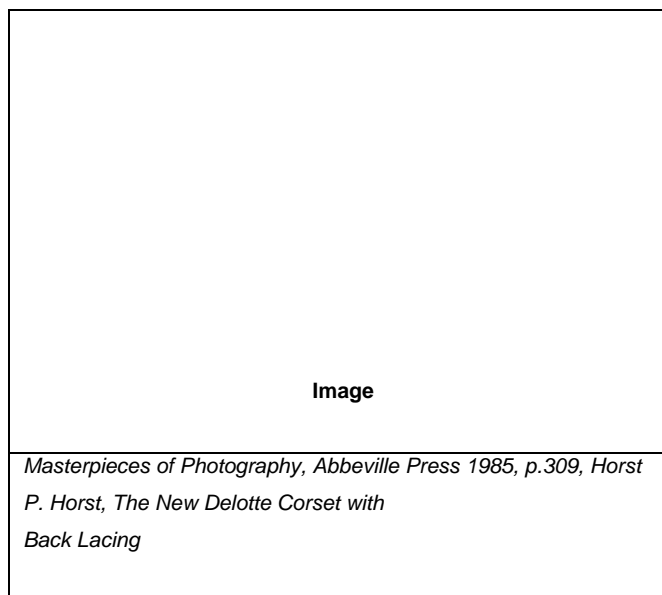
Worse still they are personal mirrors by which we see only ourselves. We have been misplaced in our environment because of these things. The polemic which is used to form these things dictates the relationship of man to the earth.

Our experiences of the earth, the natural world and our cities have become fragmentary and piecemeal. There has entered into our lives too much uncertainty and chaos. Meaning has been swept away from us in ever increasing flood tides of new and newer but valueless information. The most recent expression of the industrial process has been the media explosion, especially television which has brought the distant places closer but not near as Heidegger has put so well in his essay 'The Thing'.

Television has brought programs from all over the world but they have been reduced by the law of averages to the average expression of humanity. It brings us no closer either to the place or the idea of a totality. There is no understanding of the distance that has been travelled in the between. Science has finally confirmed for us that we live in a spaceless, timeless void in which space and time are our own creations. We finally face the truth that our understanding of the order of the universe is of our own making. Without a horizon to reach, in that all horizons are simultaneously reached by modern communications, we cease to travel, to search. Without a horizon, in that we always return home, even when we circumnavigate the earth, we understand that we are not more than what we find ourselves to be. The magical fails to lift us from the earth. We are simultaneously at home and homeless.



The climb to industry has given us clocks by which we regulate our lives. These clocks, the factory sirens called us to the new centres of existence, bound us into a world of manufactured being.



In our new world, we suffer to fit the image we wish for ourselves. The path of pain in this new world is one that is simultaneously chosen and dictated.

We have failed to make for ourselves, a bed, a nest on the earth that is of this earth. Our thoughts have always been elsewhere, away from earthly things. We need to dwell. In order to dwell we must clear our place on this earth. The need to dwell is within us all. From the moment we are born we seek those places which nourish us, which stand in for the home. In our years as a young child we seek out the many thresholds between memories, dreams and reality. On staircases, in window seats, corners, near bookshelves and play grounds we live out a protected life. Places which we clear or have already cleared. Our need to dwell arises out of this and more especially something lacking; silence.

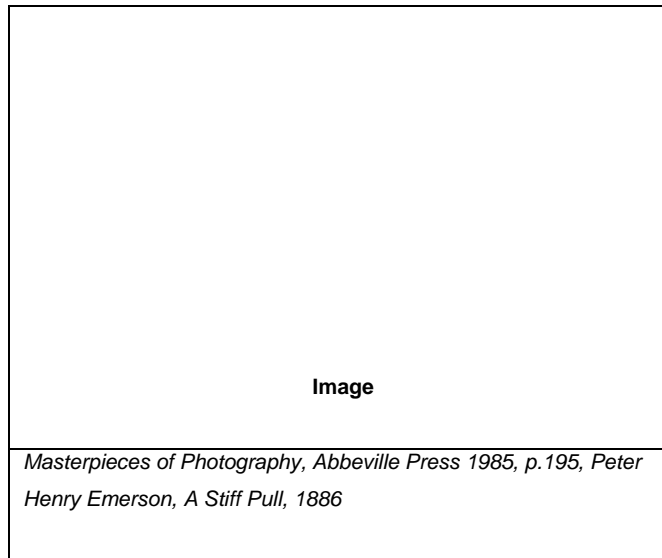
To prepare a place to dwell we must prepare a place for silence, such as the silence of the forest, where only those things which are heard are those essential to it; the sound of wind in the leaves, bird song, men felling timber and the gush of the mountain stream. These would all be aspects of the silence of the forest because they all belong there. In the city it would be necessarily different, having a different silence. This silence is not merely empty of sound, but the presence of sounds, light or things which neither clash nor interfere. It is a gathering of things in their right place so as to be silent. It is similar to the pauses in music, where one rests to gather oneself for the next movement, where one appreciates the notes played. It is an expanded threshold, where there is a peace, a sense of real being, real belonging. It is a place where life might be accessed when one chooses. There is always a distance between externalised being and internalised being. Nowhere in modern life is that pause, that unheard sound allowed, the threshold.

The screens we erect as the delineation of our world has nothing to do with humanity. It has more to do with the perceived use of space as an object worthy of sale and rent. The thin line of building is the desire to maximise the available rental space though its usefulness is never considered.

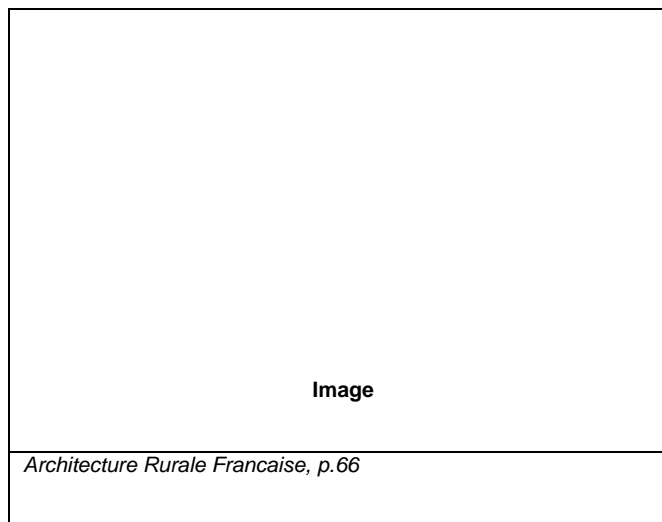
To escape into that realm of secure being we close ourselves into bathrooms, papers and personal stereos. The gathering of things around us that make place for us is the act of dwelling, it secures us, and makes fast our world. The gathering of things, building or making things that are of this silence is the key to our belonging. Our true homes allow for an inner world of secure well-being, thresholds in which one rests before leaving to enter into the exposed world outside. Thus the dwelling is the place where each day begins and at the end of day we return. It is a place of silence. At a more detailed level, the home consists of places within places, overlapping domains where life ekes out from one to the other.

So the farmer on leaving at day to work and survey his fields returns in the evening to the place at the heart of his domain. His chair, his bed, his fireplace, lies within his dwelling, within the homestead, within the farm, within the region, within the world, within the universe. Originally the farmhouse, the archetypal home, in that we were all farmers, was but a large one roomed building, before we split the home into the many compartments of the modern home through the birth of the individual and nuclear family,⁵⁹ in which each member plays out the role according to the machine.

⁵⁹ The birth of the nuclear family can be traced back to the industrial revolution when efficiency studies were applied to the family in the same manner as to factory. The scientific method developed during that age stopped at nothing, the microscope of sociologist, theoretician and factory owner were the same instrument, whose intent was to exact a better unit of production whether it be human or material. Darwin's theory of evolution, by natural selection and his controversial 'survival of the fittest' was appropriated by the establishment to decide the fate of his factory hands who were considered a species beneath that of the owners.



The farmer is made of the same land he ploughs and his simple cottage echoes this primeval relationship to the earth.



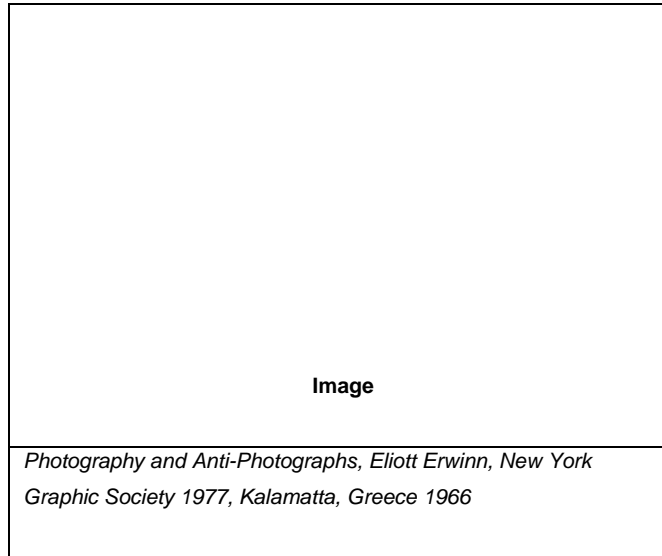
In the farmer's circle of dwelling his circle of light reaches out from the centre of his universe to touch all of his domain. Each field is formed by his hand, each fence, each gate. Dwelling allows for worlds to be created, formed and cared for. It allows for our well-being within those worlds. Well-being is something which is not a concern in our modern city. Traffic flow, efficient work rates, profit and bureaucratic systems are things which are the modern city's concern. When we handed the city over to traffic planners and road engineers, we sold our birth right. We closed the city to true participation. Our need to dwell rests above all other concerns; in fact all other concerns depend on it.

"To dwell implies the establishment of a meaningful relationship between man and a given environment. In the introduction we have suggested that this relationship consists in an act of identification, that is, in a sense of belonging to a certain place."⁶⁰

Christian Norberg Schulz

The need to dwell lies within each of our hearts. We seek it from the moment we are born. It is not mere living, it is living with purpose and knowledge of a greater unity of being, on this earth. The things we make secure that dwelling or destroy it. Through these things we identify with the earth or make it a 'parent disowned'. To dwell we need to participate in the clearing and the making of true things which stand in the clearing.

⁶⁰ Christian Norberg Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, p.13, Rizzoli, 1985.



We are identified by our actions. The things we make are identified by our actions. Together our actions identify us to thing and vice versa. The thing leaves its mark on us in the same manner we leave our mark.

Identification

"All those things for which we have no words are lost."⁶¹

Anne Dillard

In order for dwelling to occur man must be able to identify with the given environment as Knut does in the story 'The Last Man Home', he must be touched and have touched the place which has been cleared. The act of dwelling is a two way exchange which involves giving yourself up to the place and in turn taking from that place.

*"If you would have a thing shrink,
You must first stretch it;
If you would have a thing weakened,
You must first strengthen it;
If you would have a thing laid aside,
You must first set it up;
If you would take from a thing,
You must first give to it."⁶²*
Tao Te Ching

In other words a jug may not give up its contents until it has first been filled. The environment is like this, it is both formed by man as he himself is formed in turn by it. This reciprocal relationship is at the heart of the notion, identification. Therefore the thing must be recognisable, it must carry traits of the place it is from, just as one has an accent with identifies you with a certain place in the world. Furthermore it is an act of taming. Taming is more than subjugation; it is the giving over of yourself to something else, an act of true love.

⁶¹ Anne Dillard, *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, p.99, Harper and Row, 1982

⁶² Tao Te Ching, Book One, XXXVI, p.95, Penguin 1983

"No," said the little prince. "I am looking for friends. What does it mean "tame"?" "It is an act too often neglected," said the fox. "It means to establish ties..." "But you must never forget it. You become responsible, forever for what you have named."⁶³

Antoine de Saint Exupéry

The thing must be formed by the place as much as man himself is formed of the place. Without this relationship it is placeless. This is more than any mere contextual relationship, more than the choice of materials. Its response must occur at all levels, from the sensuous to the intellectual. We are, after all, sentient beings.

Because continuity of a place and the things gathered there are important, an important part of giving that man has to offer is naming, the thing, place or being. The word communicates reality. Man names his offspring, his belongings, his land, his friends and foes, his religions and his sciences. Within the word is the truth of his reality. His first act of identification is the naming of it. The river, the tree, the sky, the house, the field. Therefore the thing must also be able to continue carrying the name. We can continuously recognise those things named for we keep these names, just as we keep those things we value.

However in order to maintain the name it must be re-spoken, it must carry on from generation to generation. This reiteration or affirmation is how truth is maintained and how identification is continued. This is why reiteration, especially amongst poets is of vital importance.

⁶³ Antoine de Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, p.80, p.88, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1971

For they are, as we will see, harbingers and custodians of the constants. The continued vitality of any language, spoken or of other forms depends on its continuous resurrection and replanting in new ground. The life of any language, be it visual, physical or oral remains in the hands of the poets. If the poets die the language dies. When we have difficulty in understanding or realising a things worth it is the poets who remind us of our roots, our origins. This is both something to embrace and fear for its power is also dangerous. We have hinted at the origin of the word Raum⁶⁴. Because the word is at its root the first task of identification is naming, it is the first giving before there can be any taking. Thus it sets our reciprocal relationship to the earth.

*"The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to
heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name."⁶⁵*
William Shakespeare

Naming itself is not sufficient alone to establish belonging. There must be some interaction, some active participation which makes for identifying behaviour. A farmer ploughs his fields, a forester tends and cuts trees, and a merchant plies his trade in the city. There is always an activity in belonging, in seeking and receiving identification.

⁶⁴ See Martin Heidegger for a better understanding. So it is for all things and all names subsequently. Our spoken language is our oldest artefact.

⁶⁵ William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream, ActV, Sc.I, Lns 12-17

In seeking and receiving there derives a new environment, one formed out of man, his cities, his towns, his villages or farmsteads. Thereafter the word, the name, is tied to activity, to place, to the earth and eventually to man himself. We know many such examples.

One such example is the word and name smith, which was derived from smithing, blacksmithing, iron smithing, to be smithen, beaten. The beating of the iron has given a name to a man, to a place and to their relationship. It is this which we call identification. The taming of the iron is man's act. It is this which is at the heart of belonging.

Because we can identify we have the opportunity for belonging. Naming and doing are intimately linked. When this relationship is broken so are our ties to reality. The name derives from the essential character of the thing itself and the use of that thing, its being. The thing provides within itself the place where identity resides. It is a place cleared for the dwelling of the name, dwelling of identity, of belonging. Names are never accidents; they are always opportunities for identification.

When a thing is formed it is worked and reworked in order to establish and re-establish its being, no birth being instantaneous. This reworking is not a reworking in styles. They are attempts to get to grips with the essence of the thing created, to search out its being. The things we make tend to be used up in our lives, requiring repair and rebuilding. Even this reconstruction or recreation is in itself at the heart of the thing. Often the moment of repair is taken as a moment when a reworking may occur.

Image

*Masterpieces of Photography, Abbeville Press 1985, p.265, Lewis
Wickes Hine, Icarus atop the Empire
State Building, 1931*

The problem of identification in our world today is more than our location. It is in our activities which are removed from usual understanding, experienced by few rather than the community and separated from the earth.

By reconstructing something one is linked to the ancient. The shrines at Ise are direct descendants of the first archetypal or prototypical condition. In ever newness they stand created for eternity because of the will and continuous reworking by man of their matter. Situated in the middle of a forest they take from the trees the necessary material with which they are built and in the clearing stand, the forest recreated. To attempt to build something which never decays is man's attempt to establish a sense of permanence in the fragility of life. Whether by rebuilding or using materials which decay slowly the essential character is the same, the will for continuity of culture and values. This work speaks much about the persistence and essential qualities of human existence.

"...our accomplishment lies in retaining what threatens to pass away." ⁶⁶

Hans Georg Gadamer

This retention or the edification of human values gives rise to the archetype; the universal edification of values which derives from identification. Awakening resonances deep within us we recognise the place and our location. The archetype is handed down hand to hand while being adjusted by each hand. The thing alters its form but essentially remains the same, thus a chair is a chair is a chair. We are brought in touch with men of all cultures and ages by means of the thing which is aligned to the archetype. Our belonging is confirmed by identifying with each place, each location and preserved because of the artefact.

⁶⁶ Hans Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, p.46, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, Cambridge University Press, 1986

Poetic dwelling

It is by virtue of the poetic gesture that we fully dwell which accomplishes this sense of belonging. Without poetry, this binding constant, we would fail to be at peace anywhere. To be at peace, to rest, to stop and be consciously aware of the earth is essential to being.

"But I am a builder of cities. It is my purpose to lay well and truly, here and now, the foundations of my citadel. For here I have halted the progress of the caravan, which was but as a seed borne in the wind's lap."⁶⁷

Antoine de Saint Exupéry

It is precisely this setting down which begins our place making. Once a clearing has been made, a mark is made on the ground, a prayer is sometimes offered, sometimes a sacrifice. This mark, made with a staff, a spade or even a surveyor's level, sets the attitude for dwelling. In layers, the foundations are made, followed by the structures which evolve around our lives. Our existence comes first, never the building, we do not as Peter Eisenmann tells us, invade our homes and take possession; they are like clothes to us. They have been stitched and adjusted to our bodies and our existential experience.

By setting up our homes and places of work according to the world alone we define our existential experience before it has occurred. The place of our being is thus constricted to predictability rather than possibility. We have around us many things which have been included in our lives which are answers to problems created by the world.

⁶⁷ Antoine de Saint Exupéry, p.12, *The Wisdom of The Sands (Citadelle)*, University of Chicago Press, 1979

Microwave ovens and other high speed food processors tie us closer to the industrial machine rather than liberate us from it. Our relationship, even to our food, has become narrow and merely based on consumption. Food is a matter of calorie intake rather than an expression of gathering, of living or of being. The earth is now seen as a provider of various animal and vegetable foodstuffs which are packaged in unrecognisable forms. The requirement that we had for dialogue is missing here also; the lack of recognition and the non-durability of things.⁶⁸

The home has become a place where little activity takes place anymore. The time which is spent in the work place and commuting in today's cities exceeds that spent at home. It has become a temporary shelter where certain dwelling rituals take place, bathing, eating, sleeping, and raising children. Unfortunately, the need to dwell, which is present in all of us, which desires that there is a resolution between world and earth, man and the city is not been answered by our present environment.

There was a time when the earth was truly alive to us; the spiritual could be seen in all things. That time has passed; the de-mystification of the earth has done us a disservice, cutting off our return to the earth. The maps in which we wrote our destiny and mapped our path from the origin has been wiped clean. The manner in which we used to live was poetic. It gathered all things into a single totality which served to support our need to dwell, by clearing and building which concretised that existence. Where there remains separation there can only be tragedy and comedy. Because of this there can be no true rest, no peace. We will wander condemned, like ghosts to search for a means to set the world right.

⁶⁸ Because of the requirements of the food industry a selection of novelties to entice the consumer, different kinds of food (in truth repackaged foods which are all the same) appear each week on supermarket shelves. By changing but a few of the ingredients one can change much of today's processed food into something which appears to be different.

Image

*Andre Kertesz, Pantheon 1986, p.28, In the Basement,
Williamsburg, 1948*

TOWARDS THE POETIC

PART THREE

THE POETIC

Image

Noel J. Brady, Rose Gondola, Venice, 1986

*"A temple upon eyes
Dark for eternity,
Without the gods we go
Towards divinity."⁶⁹*
Paul Valéry

⁶⁹ From the poem 'Song of Columns' by Paul Valéry, p.239, Paul Valéry, An Anthology, Bolligen Series XLV©A, Princeton 1977

Introduction

The artefacts that I would call poetic are those that mark our place, confirm our existence by gathering the earth together in order that it might be revealed, that we might see the relationships which form reality. This I believe can be achieved by the conscious act of forming, or the act of the will to be. However by virtue of this act, the thing becomes invisible when the greater whole is revealed. Eric Gunnar Asplund's Woodland Chapel is one such thing. There man is united with the forest, with his own origins, with death and consequently life by virtue of the thing, by virtue of the poetic which reveals the forest, reveals the earth, thus describes man's existence. In the Ise Shrine, the forest is recaptured, reiterated each time the thing is constructed. The culture of man, his attempts to come to terms with his existence, at least in order that he might accept this miraculous condition is immortalised in the things he preserves and continues. The constant as Le Corbusier relates is brought forth and we are united with it, the axis of our culture, of all cultures is immortalised, by the Greeks when they petrified their timber temples, by the Japanese when they reconstruct the shrine every twenty years and by Asplund or Foster when they awake the archetype in our collective unconscious.

By its very nature the role of the maker is that of the poet. He marks man's position, gathers the earth and world, reveals them for what they are and as such enshrines truth.

Markings

The first act of dwelling is clearing and building. This can be summed up in the word settling, the making of marks in one or more places. It is the act of anchoring the body and soul to the earth. In earlier times the mark would never be made without consulting the chosen. In Egypt it was the high priests; the chief mathematicians, in China the master of Feng Shui.⁷⁰ In the modern world it is the engineer, architect or surveyor who makes the first mark. The intention today is not so much to bring about favourable conditions for dwelling as making profit from every available square foot. In ancient times the measure for building was taken from man himself. The measure today is a series of minimum codified dimensions. Our culture thus measured by minimum considerations for human activity have equally minimum consideration for humanity and maximum consideration for profit.

In ancient times the setting out or laying of foundations for the house or the 'citadelle' were the same. The lie of the land, the predominant environmental conditions, the available materials and the colloquial religions or beliefs, all interwove a pattern on the ground. This is the first poetic act, the gathering of all these things together into a unified whole, into a single thought, a thought constructed.

Ancient civilisations make us wonder at the skills they brought to bear on the gathering of the sacred and profane in their cities. Their understanding of existence was clearer, based on faith in part in a pantheistic or monotheistic universe. Regardless of the colloquial religion there was always a place for the earth and the world. Man's actions in relation to the earth were always connected to the larger conception of the universe.

⁷⁰ Feng Shui, literally translated is 'wind' and 'water', is the Chinese art of placement.

*"He cuts his path, like a writing on the surface of the earth....The house was geographically dependent. Its location was defined by gifts from land and sea.... The house became a symbol of activities pertaining to well-being."*⁷¹

Sverre Fehn

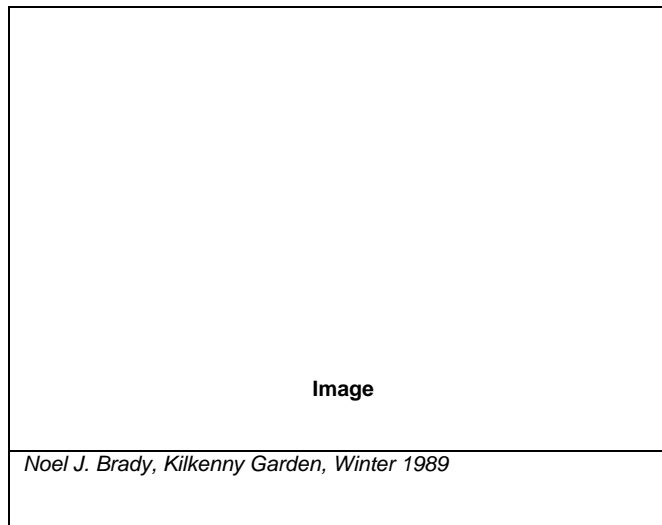
Here, Sverre Fehn eloquently describes the danger of misplacing the house out of context. The house developed from a close relationship to the landscape, from the dialogue with the earth and spoke of 'well-being'. To be a symbol is as Gadamer recounts, a token of remembrance. In this case it is the remembrance of the years of existence, the passage of days, the touch of the earth. In this lies the warning that to remove a token of remembrance from one place to another would be to destroy the memories held within the thing. The house is now little more than a real estate investment. Many are built as poor renditions of houses once built in truth in a landscape to which they responded. The participation that brought the first house into being is missing.

Permanence is sought in the image of historicity instead of growing out of the persistence, the durability of being. Nowhere is there a concern for dwelling in a poetic sense. True a gathering does take place but revolves around the increasing the resale value of the house, rather than any effort for a 'wonderfully fitting relationship' of earth and world. Our landscape would be different if it were so. Instead of an extended suburb of revisionist facades we would have a city where man's well-being would have more value. Beginning with the marks we make, we set down our first intent, our will on the ground.

⁷¹ Sverre Fehn, p. 24©26, *The Thought of Construction*, Rizzoli 1983

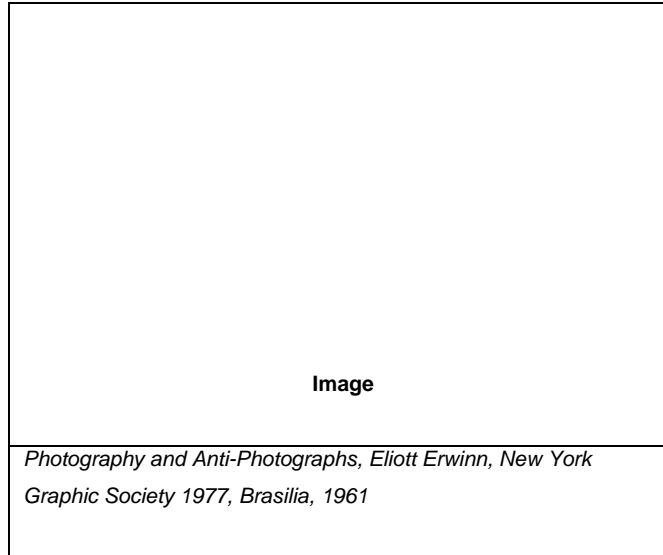
For dwelling, therefore, to be poetic man must be able to come in contact with the earth to be able to span that distance which is between him and the earth. Into this realm enter the story, the poem, the song, the myth. This is the true history of mankind, his experiences and struggles. Arising from the distance travelled is a respect for the day or the steepness of terrain. Our response to the land, to the sky is our participation with the earth. The first evidence of our participation is the marks we make. However our touch has become mechanised. Our marks bear this evidence, in the straightness of our roads, the tallness of our buildings. Without the machine we could not do what we have done. Consequently we have become lazy because of it. If we insist that servants, mechanical or human, touch our gardens, our soils, our food, our air, our paths, our plants, our homes, then we will surely lead a narrow existence where all experiences are reduced to second or third hand affairs where, we have no senses to trust but those of our servants (machines). Thus removed we cannot touch reality and as such cannot touch the spirit, the essence of being, or be touched by it. We have developed systems that act on our behalf and mark the land where we once had an intimate relationship. Our present relationships have thus become exchanges of metal or information. They become empty gestures lacking depth, the sensitivity of touch. Without these connections there can be no dialogue with the earth.

True communication occurs where there is an exchange; a participation. Without it the jug will remain empty. Today the television exemplifies the world where participation is impossible, where the flow of information is in one direction.



We touch the earth with the mechanical sterility of mere aestheticism. Lightly touching the earth, the threshold of existence disappears in the cutting edge of the industrial cast.

There are places on this planet that still manage to exist in the manner that is noble, a true relationship between man and the earth. Often they retain the original forms of marking place. The rebuilding of the shrines of Ise remains a constant part of Japanese culture. If we wipe out this way of being we may well wipe out our own existence on the planet for without our giving in return for what we take there will be nothing left to take. The jug will remain empty. Arising from this very being, man's fully giving, and taking, not merely ravaging the land, is an understanding for what is and was, will be. Out of this arises a new world, a world which has `opened' itself for man, disclosed itself in the open for man. This is our only true measurement, our true datum, our dwelling, our poetic dwelling facing the abyss. Only from this critical position will there be a proper concern for the marks we make and how the city is set out in relation to the earth.



If we continue to mark our existence by these empty gestures, sitting in a desert that they have created it will make for a place of alienation, where the man's being is anything but well.

Gathering

When involved with the making of any thing we first must gather the materials from which the thing will be formed. When making a fire we gather wood and tinder. When we make a bed we gather the linen and blankets. When we make pots we gather the clay, the water, the glazes. But that alone does not explain the activity of making. It does not explain the way in which these are gathered and assembled. In gathering the material there is some unifying idea, some thought behind the search for material. In gathering there is also an ordering so that the thing might make sense and be of use; so the fire might burn and the bed be suitable for sleep, a hierarchy of intent. In the manufacture of the poem there is a unifying idea, a plot as Aristotle would put it, some constant by which the thing is anchored. It lies behind the ability to unify the images which in reality might be far apart. This is what we usually mean when we use the word poetic; an ability to unify even the most disparate elements, even things which appear to be opposites. It is in this realm that we find the metaphor at work, the process of translation.

Nevertheless it is gathering that matters here. This is a skill worthy of a long apprenticeship, continued practice and devotion to art. What characterises all gathering is a search for material or elements that will constitute the final form. In poetry it will be words, in building a fire; wood, in the making of a pot; clay, glazes and water, in the building of a home; masonry, timber, even family, in ourselves; readings, experiences, friends and teachers. From this comes the artefact.

The ability to choose the right fire wood, warm blankets, or clay, is not a skill to belittle. Taking only the material necessary and appropriate is the basic skill, techné. Techné, or our modern word technique is the art of doing something with skill or character. In its original form it also meant the bringing into being, or facilitating action. In this broader realm we might understand gathering in a clearer light, particularly if we apply techné to gathering. Heidegger relates it, Greek terms to letting appear, which could be aligned to Kahn's thoughts in letting a thing be what it wants to be. As we have seen earlier building when considered in terms of an act of dwelling is the clearing of a place in order that dwelling might come into being. "The nature of building is letting dwell."⁷² In this way the craftsman, or maker plays a humble role of catalyst in allowing 'things to be as they want to be'. Moreover it is this act of facilitating which is the maker's true role. The skill which enables that role is rightly known as technique.

Gathering is one of our most ancient of all human acts. We were always harvesters and collectors of all forms, from the original farmers and herbalists to latter-day museum owners. Technique is also aligned to the repetition of acts, the repeating of certain rituals which form our skills. In repetition the act is formed anew again and again. The craftsman seeks to do the same thing better. Each time the thing is worked the archetype is touched, the heart of the thing is brought to the surface to shine once more. This is techné, the bringing from concealment the heart or essence of the thing itself, bringing into being, encouraging, with a lavishness of touch and retouch.

⁷² Martin Heidegger, *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*, p.158, Poetry, Language, Thought, Harper and Row, 1975

As man's skills become more attuned to the tasks at hand he develops his technique which is in reality finding it simpler to do the same thing over and over again, bringing the essence out in newer forms, by repetition, by learning from experience. This is the world of the apprentice, the learning of a skill until one is familiar to do something with ease.

Technique today has become tied to the word technology which is not necessarily aligned to an idea of craft nor the revealing of essence in the thing. It is associated with a certain 'technological' complexity involving the use of metals, plastics, electronics and other industrial processes. Its intimacy with industry and reliance on materials which cannot be produced by other more simple processes, places the artefacts out of reach from the skills of all but a minor number of 'technicians'.⁷³ The rise of the technician over craftsman is symptomatic of the destitution in our time where participation in what is made for the world has lessened. Man was first taken away from the land to be placed in the factory only to be removed from the factory because the new technological processes require fewer 'technicians' who monitor computers and robots. Ironically it was England which had the last remaining craft traditions in its factories which left it vulnerable to those who would ruthlessly follow the technological path.

This false use of the word technique can be seen in the products that surround us. The new technological processes and objects that are made lack the very nature of techné, that of letting appear. Most of the present industrial, technological processes involve the concealment of function, the concealment of reality.

⁷³ Minor in relation to the population of the planet and minor in relation to the number of products that they are responsible for.

A simulated reality is used to 'sell' an otherwise useless thing. Ultimately reality is shifted because of these things. In truth these things never appear to be what they are.⁷⁴

The object of building a fire is to choose pieces that will eventually be consumed by the fire, preferably so that none remains. In other words it should be that the material content is essentially minimum. The true use of techné is as I have said to let appear the essential quality of the thing. If any material is used which is less than essential a pattern of interference is set up. This is more apparent when the role of ornament, instead of enhancing the underlying pattern crosses over its boundary and confuses or hides the original intent. To get to the heart of the matter we must necessarily get beneath the surface, but when the surface sends us elsewhere we have little hope of revealing anything or letting anything appear.

"Most of us tend to take things too literally by way of sense and learned identification. I want to get at another aspect of experiencing, to see beyond the image, behind appearance. Taking things too literally stands in the way of this like a veil."⁷⁵

Paul Caponigro

The poetic transcends the literal and as such transcends technique. The path towards the poetic is 'A Patient Search'.⁷⁶ At the root to this search is the role of gathering, gathering in a basic way and gathering in a poetic manner. Gathering has its basis in techné.

⁷⁴ Telephones which are modern within but have historical forms which reflect nothing of the method of communication nor the realities of the new systems; e.g. automobiles which have bodies evoking a past of stately grandeur while hiding modern engine systems; Rolls Royce. This development has mirrored the shifting of the word "technique's" meaning from craft to industrial processes.

⁷⁵ Paul Caponigro, originally from Paul Caonigro, 1967 Aperture Monograph. This version comes from the essay, The Wise Silence which prefaces the book by the same name, p.181

⁷⁶ See Le Corbusier, Creation is a Patient Search, Frederick A. Praeger, 1960

To gather in a poetic manner occurs when one has left the limitations of the material behind, when man has raised his eyes to the heavens, surveyed the horizon and felt the earth as if for the first time. Then, and perhaps only then the poem is born.

The limits of materials are often the point from which the true poet springs. Material is often a place from which inspiration is born. That inspiration does not occur without knowledge of the material. To know something is to know it deeply, to know its spirit, its nature. Only then can we know what it wants to be. Limited by various characteristics in the material, the poet cannot avoid seeing the material and the infinite possibilities within those limitations. It is not necessarily the material that makes the artefact; it is the way in which it is used, the will that brings it into being. What unites this is a higher purpose, a greater intent. Jung called for man to address the infinite which I echo here in a call for the poetic, a thought to unify all things, world and earth through the artefact.

By gathering the material with this intent in mind, with the same resolute one would approach building a fire, with every movement the head and hand might be united. All thoughts of the self should be left behind if we are to avoid the danger of making an object of desire, a mirror, merely of ourselves.

"More clearly than the teacher could express it in words, they tell the pupil that the right frame of mind for the artist is only reached when the preparing and the creating, the technical and the artistic, the material and spiritual, the project and the object, flow together without a break..... Only the spirit is present, a kind of awareness which shows no trace of egohood and for that reason ranges without limit through all distances and depths, with `eyes that hear and with eyes that see."⁷⁷

Eugen Herrigel

Limitations are not in the material but in our attitude to those materials. It is us in our narrowness that allow for things to exist in a narrow context. It is we who imbue the dumb stone with voices. The stone itself is mute, wordless until we touch it, give it a name and bring it to life. Our attention to gathering cannot exist in itself. It must be guided by our will. There must be reason behind this gathering; the idea or thought. This should become our technique, our guiding light, our master in our infinite apprenticeship.

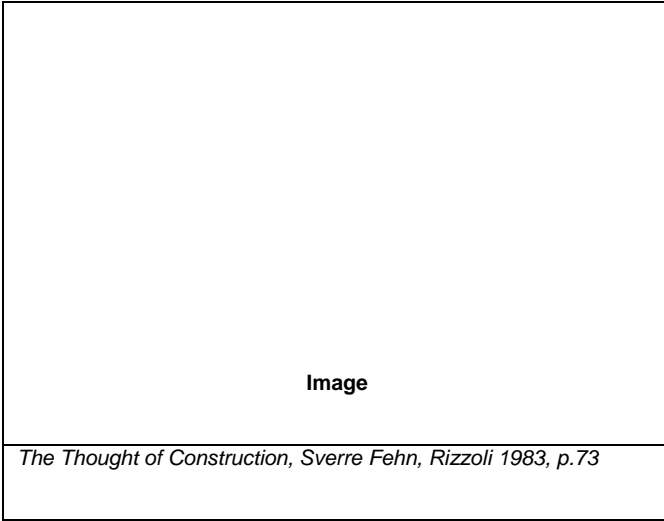
When dealing with a fire, it is easier, most people know what burns, fewer know what burns better and fewer still know what burns brightest. Each stage involves a new apprentice and a level of practice, certain techniques to be learned. What is necessary, so that the poetic may arise is a keen sense of sight to be able to see clearly what is both required and appropriate. Making something is not achieved by the gathering of material alone, nor is it achieved by ordering randomly for what is to be.

⁷⁷ Eugen Herrigel, p.48-50, Zen in the Art of Archery, Vintage Books, 1971

This sight must be cultivated, just as gardener recognizes a healthy plant or a farmer the season. In the work of Sverre Fehn one can see this sight, this sharpness of distinction in his work, and more importantly his words which underwrite his actions. His affection for the landscape, the constant landscape illuminates it further. In identification we saw the importance of participating in the reciprocal relationship of being in a landscape. This involves a giving up of oneself through one's acts to the place and allowing oneself to be formed by the place. Fehn's work brings us out of a personal landscape to bridge a universal landscape known as the earth. He shows us by his identification what it is to belong, what it is to identify and finally dwell, to be at peace with himself and the earth. His artefacts are set in the clearing between earth and world. It is in this gathering of element, landscape, people and artefact that the chasm is crossed. Like all great poets he is fully aware of the tiniest aspect of the landscape. His knowledge of this landscape is deep. It comes from his identification; he is formed by and reciprocally forms the same landscape.

We must speak a little about the intent brought to the work; the will to reveal something of the world, to reveal something of our existence, 'under the sky, on the earth', to man. In Walt Whitman's words we are encouraged in our search; "...Nature is rude and incomprehensible at first,/Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well envelop'd/I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than words can tell."⁷⁸ If only to recognise the mystery and miracle that is life so that we may have 'an art that is life'. The poet has the humble and difficult task of letting be what is.

⁷⁸ Walt Whitman, Song of the Open Road.



Sverre Fehn

Forming

Once the gathering, material and spiritual, has been completed and the sense of what is to be revealed is acknowledged in the work then forming comes into play. In his book *Experiencing Architecture*, Steen Eiler Rasmussen eloquently describes the way in which a cup comes into being by virtue of the craftsman and his sensitivity to material, gathering and the sense of rightness in his eye;

"As an example of a `soft' form in a hard material we can take a so-called pear-shaped cup from the English firm Wedgewood. It is an old model but it is impossible to say when the form first appeared. It is very alien to the classical shapes which made the founder of the firm, Josiah Wedgewood, preferred to all others. It may be that it is of Persian ancestry and was permitted to live on in English guise because it suits the potter's craft so well. You feel that you can actually see how it was drawn up on the potter's wheel, how the soft clay humbly submitted to the hands of the potter, suffering itself to be pressed in below so that it could swell out above. The handle is not cast in a mould, as on most cups today, but formed with the fingers. To avoid rims, the plastic clay is squeezed out like toothpaste from a tube, shaped over the potter's fingers and then fixed to the cup in a slender curve which is pleasant to grasp. A man at Wedgewood works, who sat making these handles, said to me that it was lovely work and that he enjoyed curving the handle in towards the pear-shaped cup."⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Steen Eiler Rasmussen, p.20, *Experiencing Architecture*, M.I.T. Press, 1986, nineteenth printing

Image

*Experiencing Architecture, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, MIT 1951, p.21,
Wedgewood Pear-shaped cup*

The pear cup by Wedgewood

The humility involved where the craftsman offers his being to the art of forming succinctly described in the above passage gives us a glimpse into the true nature of thingness. It alludes to nothing other than itself. The pear-shaped cup is given its shape as if the liquid which it will hold was already there. Its form attends to the hand that will grip it, mirroring the hand that formed it in the beginning. The relationship of man's world to earth is cyclical in nature revolving around the thing. The thing unites the potter to the drinker to the liquid to the table on which it stands and so to the world in which it is placed between man and the earth. An awkward cup might not do this, nor might one formed in a mould. In the mould the hand of the potter is lost or misplaced. Of course it is easier to have a sense of the poetic when one has less to deal with. Architecture, or the construction of buildings which by necessity are more complicated artefacts deserve much deeper thought. The forming of a piece of complete architecture is probably the most difficult making we ever encounter excepting perhaps the design of cities.

Forming is a very palpable and visible activity, so much so that one can talk about it and illustrate it in numerous ways. However only through use does a form become fully understandable, sensible, open to the senses for appreciation. Only by pouring wine from the jug is its nature fully expressed. Only in real life, and knowing the full capabilities of another human being can we say that we truly know that person. In using the jug to pour, the act dominates, in watching and experiencing the person behave, the character dominates, comes out, is revealed.

We have talked before about the poetic directing the gaze to the horizon, to the greater unity of all things. It links us directly to the thing and thus all things. The poetic artefact is archetypal in its most primitive sense, being archetypal for all things. In this way the form dissolves, becoming like all things. One might say that the thing itself, its actual figure becomes invisible. When we look to these things the associations and resonances cannot be stemmed. Our being is simultaneously raised to a level where we might view the totality of the earth, and anchored firmly in the place.

"But suppose that walls rise towards heaven in such a way that I am moved. I perceive your intentions.... You fix me to the place and my eyes regard it. They behold something which expresses a thought.... The relationships between them have not necessarily any reference to what is practical or descriptive.... By the use of raw materials and starting from conditions more or less utilitarian, you have established certain relationships which have aroused my emotions. This is Architecture."⁸⁰

Le Corbusier

⁸⁰ Le Corbusier, p.153, Towards a new Architecture, Dover Publications, 1986

Image

*Light is the Theme, Louis Kahn, Kimbell Art Foundation 1975, p.24
Kimbell Museum*

"You have established certain relationships which have aroused my emotions. This is Architecture."
Le Corbusier

Invisibility

To reiterate, the artefact stands between us and the earth, in the open, it mediates in the between. The artefact should reveal something of its secrets, of our relationships to and of the earth, our being if is to be considered a thing in the true sense. This is achieved by a certain type of gathering; we know now to be the poetic. A measure of the things success is its ability to become invisible in light of its revealing. In other words if it can place us in touch with its being and the measure of our being then it will become transparent. The artefact I would associate with being used up. Its task complete it is consumed by its own being, the jug is consumed when it pours, becoming invisible to the act.

The thing is used up over and over again in this relationship to the act. It repeatedly becomes invisible to the purpose for which it was intended. A house by analogy would disappear into a backdrop to the larger human activity of existence.

"In order not to leave any traces, when you do something, you should do it with your whole body and mind; you should be concentrated on what you do. You should do it completely, like a good bonfire.... When this kind of activity takes place, one activity covers everything."⁸¹

Shunryu Suzuki

This used-upness of the thing, in which it is consumed by our sight, our minds, is perhaps better explained by analogy to a mirror. A mirror is something which becomes invisible when one looks into, beyond its surface. It is like a catalyst unaltered in the reaction.

⁸¹ Shunryu Suzuki, p.63, Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, Weatherhill, 1988

It allows for things other than itself to be seen. It brings the distance closer; one could say it is the ideal bridge. The mirror I talk about, though benefiting from the optical analogy is not a literal mirror.

Since the thing mediates between us and the earth and as such is a reflection of this relationship then we may refer by analogy, by definition even, that the thing is a mirror. So when we look deep into the Acropolis we see man's relationship to the hill, to the sea, to the heavens, to himself and his understanding. Like Alice we can step in through the looking glass, for that is what it is, a glass or window into another world. This world is within the thing, it is at the heart of matters, it is all being. This being is formed in and of the earth, never apart or removed from it. Because it is of the earth it is ideally constructed to bridge the void. The mechanism at work here is also a mechanism which is at play in poetry; the metaphor.

For those things which we have made as mirrors to our vanity I offer another analogy, that of two mirrors facing one another in which the repetitive image continues infinitely. The gaze is captured in this infinite cycle, which cannot be broken until the mirror breaks. In this situation the mirror never disappears. Those things we would make that have this condition, are not of real use.

Metaphor, Meaning, Myth

The way in which man extends his understanding of the earth and universe is by the use of metaphor, the translation of the unknown into known things or concepts. These translations come to mean something, begin to stand in for actual events. In time these metaphors are engrained into the fabric of the culture. They emerge in our language confirming its poetry. The metaphor is the source of all our stories, legends and myths.

Myths are born of metaphor, sometimes because of the burden of meaning which the original metaphor is no longer able to carry on its own, or when our beliefs have moved on rendering the original meaning either obsolete or lacking in some manner. The myth is important in that it can carry the metaphor, the meaning further as the culture develops. It helps immortalise the culture's existence which is in truth the existence of its people. In every culture there is the hope for permanence, the will to continue and make permanent their highest achievements. In the languages of our activities we find evidence, on the Acropolis where a timber architecture has been petrified, transformed into stone, in Ise where the buildings are rebuilt every twenty years, in the Valley of the Kings, where the tombs were made large enough as to withstand the elements. These places held the things valuable to the culture, their jewels, their memories, their beliefs, their hopes and fears. They held secrets beyond our conception. Much of these secrets, the original metaphors, their subsequent myths have been lost to a culture which stores little of this nature. We should mourn the passage of our myths, they are witness to our loss of the poetic.

"I have always loved the desert. One sits down on a desert sand dune, sees nothing, hears nothing. Yet through the silence something throbs, and gleams...

'What makes the desert beautiful,' said the little prince, 'is that somewhere it hides a well...'

I was astonished by a sudden understanding of that mysterious radiation of the sands.⁸²

Antoine de Saint Exupéry

Could it be possible that we might have new metaphors for our existence from which might grow new myths? It is not necessary that our myths be the same as those we have lost, it is necessary that we have them.

⁸² Antoine de Saint Exupéry, p.92-93, *The Little prince*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971

Image

Masterpieces of Photography, Abbeville Press 1985, p.118, Francis Frith, Pyramids of Sakkarah

Revealing

"Man himself is approved by the universe, so we contain within ourselves the knowledge of the universe.

To express is a necessity. He will reveal the universe that which has approved his existence."⁸³

Louis Kahn

Revealing means an uncovering. It presumes something of value which is hidden, worthy of discovery, worthy of illumination. If we return to the example of the bridge, not only is a place prepared by its existence we have also seen it become a measure, a measure other than an empirical meter. It reveals itself to be valuable, that it may have a secret. It reveals something of the distance transversed. The artefact makes the distance visible, experiential, it reveals our relationships, our need for a place, a bridge. It makes real our inner thoughts, our values.

"The art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e. this deconcealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work. Art is truth setting itself to work....Art works universally display a thingly character, albeit in a wholly distinct way."⁸⁴

Martin Heidegger,

Heidegger, here, admits the primacy of the thing, or the thingliness of things within which truth is bounded, within which the distance between the earth and world is anchored, concretised. It stands in the open between the earth and ourselves.

⁸³ Louis Kahn, p.5, The Little Journal, Society of Architectural Historians, September 1981

⁸⁴ Martin Heidegger, The Origin of the Work of Art, p.39, Poetry, Language, Thought, Harper and Row, 1975

Image

Shaker Design, Whitney Museum 1986, p.113, Basket

Image

Shaker Design, Whitney Museum 1986, p.118, Pail, Tub

Artefacts which portray a thingly character

We aspire to artefacts which have the same aspiration as art, that of displaying a thingly character. In other words the artefact sets truth to work, thus revealing, de-concealing the 'Being of all beings'. But this revealing is not instantaneous. It requires our look, our gaze to unlock the secrets.

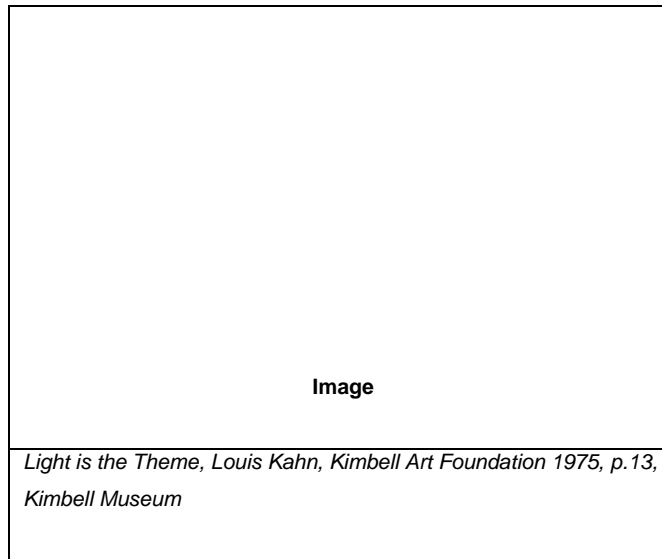
We live where our eyes linger. Our eyes linger on or near the thing, always. Our gaze is always focused by the things we make and those we find. Our position is always made in relation to things. What is concealed, hidden from view, is the reality of its existence, its being, its soul one might say. What is concealed is its history, its growth, its survival, its origin. In that evidence of what has formed it, caused it to exist in the open, brought about its reality, is locked inside. Being concealed means that it has the potential of being uncovered, thus we become archaeologists. The dawning of consciousness is often defined as seeing as if for the first time, or revelation. Though it may be shared by many revelation by its nature remains a very personal experience.

"...as if to say the sun never knew how great it was until it struck the side of a building."⁸⁵

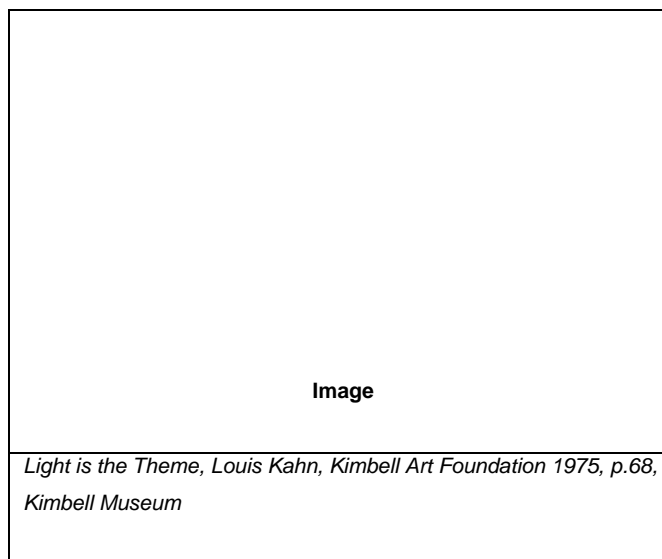
Louis Kahn

Once discovered, the concealed is disclosed revealing the true relationship of things. It is the measure of our being, our existence. It is our values revealed where they cannot hide standing alone in the brightness of the open. It stands in truth, alone without need of support. Without the truth of our being and the truth of things we will remain lost in the forest of useless things.

⁸⁵ Louis Kahn, p. 12, *Light is the Theme*, Kimbell Art Foundation, 1978



Revelation of the true relationship of things is only too clear in the Kimbell Art Museum where the vault, sun and man interweave a shared pattern on the earth's surface.



Sometimes the sun truly knows its greatness. In the hands of great poets the earth is revealed to us in every detail.

Objects of Desire

The industrialisation of the world has had the effect of first removing man from the land, and secondly removing him from the workplace. We have, today, less people involved with actually making things than in the past. Most are involved with what is called service sector activities. In other words the majority of the planet is in servitude to a corporation or other people. This means that thus removed from the making of artefacts, they are removed from setting forth truth in the clearing. Those that remain in the 'workplace' are as removed from the actual process considering most things are produced 'untouched by human hand'. Perhaps some would see this as a call for craftsmen, similar to the call that the Arts and Crafts movements made in England and America, in an effort to counteract the worst abuses by the then fledgling industrial world. They failed to bring about the necessary cultural change required even with such evocative books as William Morris's 'News from Nowhere'.

This failure was one of the first of a continuing opposition to what Heidegger found was characterised by the intention of controlling and dominating nature.

"Technological thinking, as Heidegger has found, is characterised by the intention of controlling and dominating nature. Such thinking also controls and dominates man inasmuch as he is part of nature and himself has a nature. Efficiency, economy, and utility become ends in themselves rather than means to some other end."⁸⁶

Robert McCarter

⁸⁶ Robert McCarter, *Escape from The Revolving Door*, p.8, Pamphlet Architecture 12, Princeton 1987

The Bauhaus failed because their philosophies were tied too closely to machine production that they were easily appropriated by the industry they sought to humanise. Technological thinking by its very nature seeks to maximise its production by reduction of material, cost, choice and participation. Man is no exception to this process. Since the individuality of the human condition is detrimental to a fluid production line man is one of the first casualties. Appropriated by the industry like other parts of nature, man is dominated, allocated a position in the process until he can be replaced by a more efficient machine part. To industry man is a necessary handicap.

None of the thoughts which I have put forward as a way of making things of value which enable or facilitate our belonging on the earth are encountered in the industrial process. One cannot fault the machine. It is a powerful tool which gives us many opportunities, both good and bad. It is man's will who guides the use of the machine and like many tools it is a two-edged sword. The temptation to use such a tool for selfish purposes has been too tempting. Subsequently a market based on consumption over has been created to fulfil the selfish demands of the captains of industry.

Since the objects produced are to be consumed materially they cannot be tools. Instead artefacts are made that fulfil our vanity. We are encouraged to amass things which have no value other than increasing our social status while appealing to our comforts. These, in the terms outlined above, do not aspire to thingness. These mirrors to our countenance hide beneath their overtly cosmetic appearance the will by man to dominate nature and his fellow man.

Like the gaze returned upon oneself it is easy to be captured by these `objects of desire'. At once the consumer is captured into the cycle of production consumption. The process has been so seductive that many countries depend on this artificial cycle for their livelihoods making it difficult to break the cycle. The seductive side of technology, a mythical (in the narrowest sense) technology which can do almost anything, relieve pain, give comfort, is used to `sell' these things. But these things merely give the appearance of comfort and quality. Their role is a subversive one in terms of the human condition. Mirrors to our own vanity we are captured like Narcissus. We are encouraged to have around us various machines and other objects which have a dubious value other than the appearance of status. In this search we dedicated ourselves to going beyond mere aestheticism. Technology and industry never go beyond that state. The history of product development is a history man's enslavement to the machine. We are made to believe that our very well-being is dependent on the machine, but as I have illuminated above our well-being is dependent on other more permanent things. These `objects of desire' are ephemeral and much more liable to redundancy than anything I have talked about. Their intent is purposefully hidden beneath their facade.

"We are only too familiar with the way in which machines in our time are enveloped in arbitrarily shaped enclosures: `skins' that, rather than revealing the forms of the mechanism underneath, are determined by criteria related to fashion and market studies."⁸⁷

Robert McCarter

⁸⁷ Robert McCarter, *Escape from The Revolving Door*, p.8, Pamphlet Architecture 12, Princeton 1987

TOWARDS THE POETIC

PART FOUR

POETIC THINGS



Here⁸⁸

This hut is larger than the earth,
Since there is nothing that is not.
In the small charcoal stove

Burn sun and countless stars,
And the corners of the kitchen
Buzz with humankind.

Shinkichi Takahashi

⁸⁸ Shinkichi Takahashi, Here, p.101, Afterimages, London Magazine Editions 1971

Introduction

Primal, universal and archetypal relationships

There are many fine examples that one could use. I have by association, by photograph alluded to what I consider to be a poetic artefact. I have tried to avoid the obvious trap of listing a comprehensive selection for fear that they would be taken as a definitive range. I have my favourite poets which do not deny the existence of others, so any selection would be conditioned by such an editorial. Instead by illuminating two particular examples one might find a basis to examine others.

The two places I have chosen are separated by time and distance but their true tradition is timeless and their culture is universal. Within each of these buildings is secreted the very essence of being, the very soul of thingness. The relationships that are brought to bear are primal, universal and archetypal. In each we will find the incomprehensible basis of reality illuminated, our being revealed and the abyss bridged in a single poetic gesture.

These things confirm our belonging. They infuse our senses with this belonging. We begin to dwell in the deepest sense. The culture is immortalised in them, the ideas, the thoughts constructed are tied to the constant, the axis of all things, of all being.

To begin however we must return to early man, primitive man. There was a time when much of the inhabited planet was covered in forest. It is likely that, excepting the use of caves, that the hut is our archetypal and original dwelling. Wood is much easier to manipulate and has additional advantages such as insulation and weight.



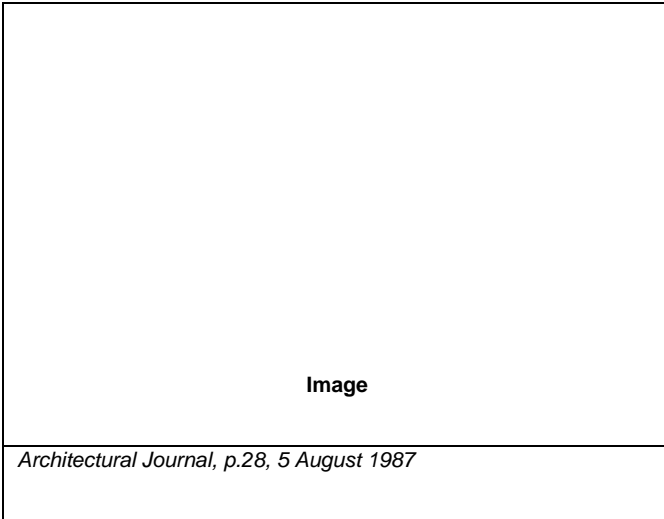
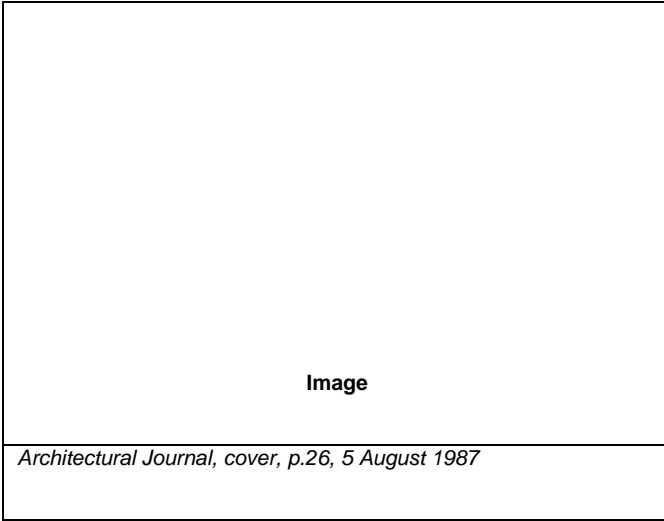
The tree is likely to be the original source of building material, fuel and even food.⁸⁹ It is completely understandable that many religions and myth contain a version of the tree of life.

⁸⁹ Even knowledge, see Adam and Eve.

The forest, being our original home, is likely to have provided much of the needed resources for existence. Natural clearings would be have been the place of original dwelling, the archetypal community. Later as intellects and tools were developed new clearings could be made, providing material for newer huts and fuel for newer fires. As hunters and collectors, these early peoples benefited by organising into groups that hunted or collected more efficiently. It was necessary to use every available resource that was available, of which the human resource was the most valuable. This cooperation continued into the erection of communal forms, the storehouse and fortification. Along with the temple, tomb and meeting hall these constituted the complete range of archetypes which has not been elaborated much in the millennium that have passed since. These things represent the dawning of consciousness. They show man's realisation that he existed, that others like him exist, that the earth existed in forest and sky, river and prairie, animal and plant. Shelter was the first creative act, thus making for our oldest activity. When we build our homes today we are tied to our ancient ancestors. The storing of food to ward off famine would follow along with fences against attacks by animals and other men, communal meeting places and graves.

It is appropriate therefore to find that the earliest gods were revered in the forest, the stream, the wind, the storehouse; all essential to primitive man, all essential to life in the forest. The archetypes that originated there constitute our primary relationship to the earth, the setting forth of truth in the clearing. The origin of geometry witnesses the birth of reason and calculation, necessary for planning.

Numbers appear in these works, orchestrating more complex arrangements, standing in for cosmic relationships. These raw and essential artefacts were, with spoken language, our first poetry. They have never left us, these things; they have been reawakened in many forms since. It is true that we have added many newer activities to our daily lives and are reflected in buildings which have come a long way from the original hut. However the things we would call poetic have never forgotten the hut, for in them is the hut reiterated, the story of man's existence, of coming to terms with an incomprehensible reality is retold once more. We are at once linked to our roots, linked to the earth, become one with all things. Without these connections, this essential foundation we do not belong. Today our activities betray our shallow relationship to the earth. We do not touch or allow to be touched by the earth.



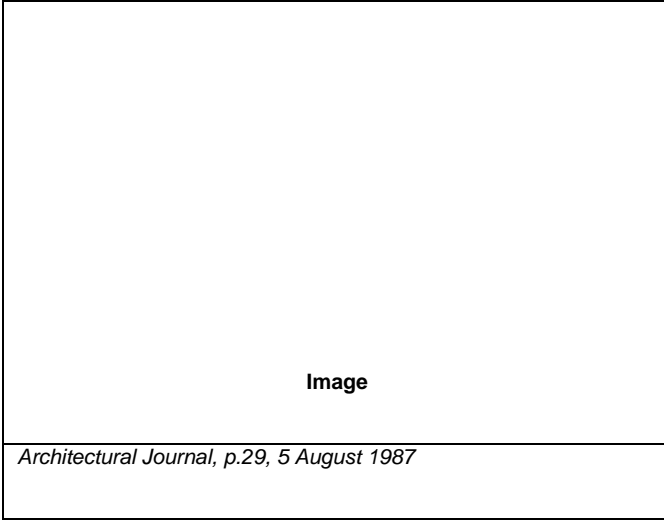
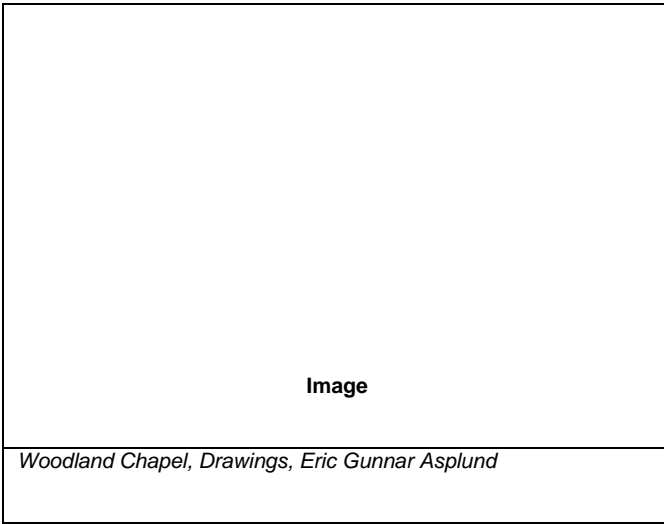
The Woodland Chapel

The Woodland Chapel by Eric Gunnar Asplund

In a dense forest outside Stockholm, Sweden, there is a low wall marking off a place. Such walls are reserved for secure or sacred places. These are the primary marks of a place in the continuous forest which exists inside and outside the wall. It is as if the forest has populated, taken back a place that had once been cleared. It is a human place forgotten, lost under the return of nature. But still a path has been maintained, a path of reverence, memories of continuous though half-forgotten activity. Here that activity is the burial of the dead.

Entrance to the sacred place is by means of a small portal which has an elongated threshold. The entrance is not instantaneous; rather it is a path of purification from outside to inside. The wall is more than a mere line of demarcation. It is the place from which presencing begins. It is the sacred that makes its presence felt.

When the threshold has been crossed the path sets off into the enclosed forest. It is a path like many other forest paths, the ground firmly trodden, a soft mark on the earth, the evidence of human passage is scattered with the trees' shedding. In the distance a form can be glimpsed, secreted amongst the branches and pine needles. At the end of this path is a small clearing; too small to be counted as a clearing of practical use. The clearing opens up the sky into which the tall trees send their highest branches. Facing the traveller a hut like building, its heavy roof floating above its white columns and white stucco walls, stands across the path. The columns continue the rhythm set up by the trees, in truth they are trees holding up a different sky, this sky is a dark and foreboding sky that the forest has adopted.



The Woodland Chapel

Its scatterings that cover the roof shows the forest's attempts to make the hut its own. The hut resists this with humility and gentleness. It has been received by the forest on its own terms. It has been allowed to be. The hut has been set forth by man into the clearing in the forest to be welcomed and adopted. Here is the woodman's hut, the primeval dwelling, the primeval temple. All are united here.

The huts paved floor moves from under the heavy canopy to take the traveller in, to welcome him into the foreboding thing. Because the columns are white, they relieve the heaviness of the roof. There are no details to help relieve the obvious weight, as capitals or frieze. The caryatid-proud columns bear the weight of sorrow. Like pall bearers they move into the chapel. Its pyramidal form echoes the architecture of death near the Nile, whose equally heavy form weights down upon the earth in more massive ways.

"When we come across a mound in the woods, six feet long and three feet wide, heaped up with a spade into a pyramid, then we become serious and something inside us says: here someone lies buried."⁹⁰

Adolf Loos

A column for each of the months of the year, an apostle to stand guard over the passage to the 'untraveled land'. The threshold is extended once more, passing by the white columnar figures who stand watch in the shade. Under the roof the heaviness of the roof disappears into the memory to be replaced on entering, first through the mesh- like gate, the true clearing. Eight columns, compass points, raise above them the hemisphere lit from above.

⁹⁰ Adolf Loos, *Architecture* (1910), p.55, Midgard, University of Minnesota, 1987



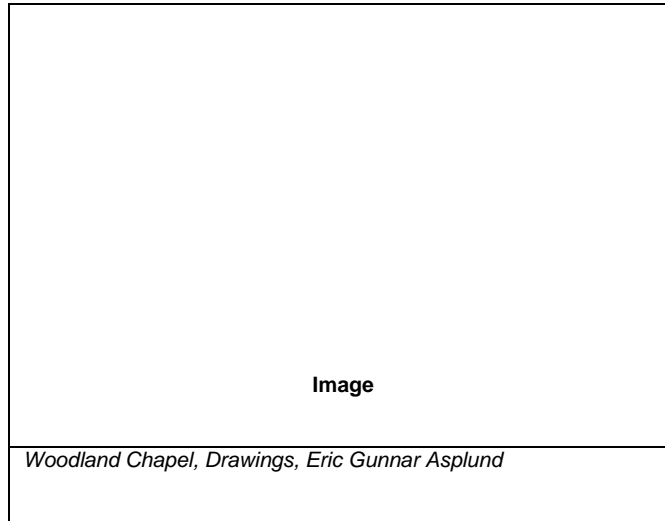
The Woodland Chapel

Inside this hemisphere the clearing is rediscovered. This is the forest's secret. The inevitability of death, its weight and sorrow is lifted into the sky where the body having travelled through life returns.⁹¹ This is the primitive clearing remade. Man's origins are linked to his destinies. We are returned to the starting place, where man first faced his existence. His story is one of passage, the many rites of passage, and this arrival from place to place through the successive gates, or stages of life he has lived to face the end that is his beginning. All ritual is awakened in the heart of the forest, once more.

In the inner chamber, the inner sanctum that is the clearing, the mourners gather in the presence of the sky, inside the roof of the archetypal hut to pay respect to the passage of life. Inside the body is relieved of the burden of weight that is life. Released from the earth, the soul is allowed to wander. So at the end of the path another more spiritual path awaits. When the mourners must return to the world they find themselves left behind. They leave the clearing, the hut, the place, never looking back fearing the weight of memory which is awakened in the dark form of the huts outward nature.

Here the original archetypes are unified into a single thought, a single landscape; the earth in the form of the forest; the clearing into which all man's works are set, the hut which stands as dwelling and depository of values and the wall which protects and marks specifically the sacred place.

⁹¹ . According to northern myths, also found in Egyptian and Indian culture.



The Woodland Chapel

The Shrines at Ise

Near Ise bay on the Izumo river in the Shimane Prefecture of Japan stands the buildings of the Naiku and Geku shrine. Between 97 - 30 B.C., Emperor Sujin instructed Princess Toyosuki-iri to build a shrine to the Sun Goddess, considered too august to be worshipped at court. In Ise she found "...a secluded and pleasant land."⁹² She wrote that it was in this land she wished to dwell. It is thought that the Naiku dates back to the fourth century while the Geku to the late fifth century. The shrines which make up the Ise collection are placed either side of the Izsumo river. The Geku shrine is a less ostentatious shrine than its sister across the stream but their essential pattern is the same and is also reconstructed every twenty years. Aside from the embellishments on the Naiku shrine they are essentially the same.

In the forests of pine which constitute Ise runs the crystal clear Izumo River into Ise bay in which the locals plied their living as fishermen. The people lived a life finely interwoven with the earth. Along with fishermen, there existed harvesters of grains and carpenters.

The paths to the shrines are paths through the forest, some of which were taboo to the 'lay people'. Made of pebbles taken from the Isuzo river these man-made paths wind their way to the sacred grounds. Just as the acropolis is reached by a rising, winding path, these shrines are placed on knolls in the forest. Knolls in forests and planes have always been sacred places for ancient peoples throughout the globe.

⁹² Originally found in *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan) dating from 720 A.D. quoted her from *Shinto Art: Ise and Izumo Shrines*, Yasutada Watanabe, Weatherhill, 1974.



Image

*Ise; Prototype of Japanese Architecture, Kenzo Tange, MIT 1968,
p.127, p.128*

The shrines at Ise

Knolls were the first observation places, the first of the sacred places, where chieftains and kings were crowned; they were also the first burial places, the high ground. They are part of the ancient fabric over which we have all but succeeded to weave a new pattern over in recent decades, but can never be fully removed from our consciousness.

"Behind all Irish history hangs a great tapestry, even Christianity had to accept it and be itself pictured there."⁹³

W.B. Yeats

The Knolls in the forests of Ise are reached by a 'sea of steps'⁹⁴ wave-like in formation to climb the terrain. Here the steps taken by man are reinforced by man's act, indicating the importance of Ise and its continued popularity, though in the ancient world of man popularity was not a feature of existence, visits to Ise would have represented life and death to the people of Honshu. Ise would have been important in times of festivals to celebrate harvests and the passage into winter when the days would shorten when fears that the sun would leave forever.

In the forest the arrival at the shrine's precinct is marked by the fallow site and the constructed site. Together they constitute the clearing. Here all clearings are reiterated, told again in the struggle of man's existence. The sites are rectangular denoting man's presence. The fallow site has at its centre a small hut-like (shin no mihashira) artefact within which is held the sacred post, which will sit under the 'new' Shoden.

⁹³ W.B. Yeats, A General Introduction to My Work, p.20, Modern Poetics, James Scully editor, Mc Graw Hill, 1965. In this Yeats refers to the pagan origins of the country and how Christianity had to accept such a foundation for existence and weave a new pattern which included the superstitions and beliefs in the ancient that such a root is too powerful and important to mankind as to disregard.

⁹⁴ See photographs on previous page for comparison of two holy places

Image

*Masterpieces of Photography, Abbeville Press 1985, p.222,
Frederick H. Evans, Wells Cathedral, 'Sea of
Steps', 1903*

Image

*Ise; Prototype of Japanese Architecture, Kenzo Tange, MIT 1968,
p.78, p.134*

The shrines at Ise

The other site is secreted away inside a timber fence. In fact the shrine is secreted inside four fences of different timber construction. To enter the inner sanctuary many thresholds must be crossed.

Like many sacred sites throughout the world these sites are oriented on a North-South axis. Besides the main shrine building, the Shoden, there are various treasure houses, entrance pavilions, guard houses and ceremonial buildings. Each of the buildings correspond to an idealised form of a hut or house. In fact are modelled after grain stores, which is in truth a house of grain. But these forms can be but glimpsed from the forest through which one climbs, into the light. The roofs stand almost man like in the clearing. The eaves pattern coincidentally can be found in some designs for the helmets which used to be worn by Samurai. These buildings stand guard over their possessions, their sacred ceremonies and mythical souls. Form and being are never separated from human existence around which these things are made.

In order to reach the Naiku the pilgrims must make their way across a cambered bridge which is guarded by torii on both sides. When the entrance to the compound is reached another torii stands guard at the entrance. Still further another, the Nakanoe torii, stands inside the second fence. The entrance to the inner place is by means of threshold after threshold. In Woodland the thresholds were spatial. Here they are two dimensional gates.

*"The sense of beauty in architecture is rooted in man's desire to bestow everyday objects with poetic content that will convey the spirit of his epoch to future generations."*⁹⁵

Robert Krier

⁹⁵ Robert Krier, p.10, Architectural Composition, Academy Editions, 1988

Image

*Ise; Prototype of Japanese Architecture, Kenzo Tange, MIT 1968,
p.71*

Image

*Ise; Prototype of Japanese Architecture, Kenzo Tange, MIT 1968,
p.77*

The shrines at Ise

The first village is recreated here with its hierarchies and values, anchored firmly forever on the earth. This is an attempt at making something which will last and carry the essence of humanity's existence into the future, for posterity, though made of wood continues, through being used up re-established by rebuilding. The story of man is retold to each successive generation in a much more real way than any history for it is truth. The renowned Japanese architect, Kenzo Tange recounted the following;

"I felt as if I had been transported back into the world of the archaic religious myths of the Japanese people."⁹⁶

Kenzo Tange

Each building in the shrine is a reworking of a very simple idea, a single space bounded by the earth and sky with a pitched roof of straw taken from nearby meadows, the timber from nearby trees. The important buildings are raised, like the grain houses from which they have derived, above the earth on timber pillars. It is appropriate also to have as a treasure house, a grain depository, which was the peoples' real wealth, necessary for their survival. Originally the gods watched over such dwellings until the gods became synonymous with dwelling within the store itself, a spirit in residence. Of the important treasures to be found at ancient shrines were mirrors, bronze mirrors. In an excavation in the Nara Prefecture, east of Ise one such mirror was found to have a relief indicating a raised-floor storehouse. Other such marks have been found on bells and shards of material that have survived the years. The importance of the storehouse is without doubt rediscovered here in the shrines of Ise.

⁹⁶ Kenzo Tange, p.16, Ise, Prototype of Japanese Architecture, MIT Press, 1965

Image

*Masterpieces of Photography, Abbeville Press 1985, p. 153,
Unidentified, Japanese Samurai, 1860's*

Image

*Ise; Prototype of Japanese Architecture, Kenzo Tange, MIT 1968,
p.31*

The shrines at Ise

In Ise we have a similar condition to the Parthenon on the Acropolis. There the attempt to have an artifact which would be a permanent depository for the values of a culture resulted in a translation of a timber construction into stone. Here at Ise the permanency of the shrine has the forest to depend on whereas in Greece, timber required for the upkeep of the Parthenon would be in short supply, or required for use in their ships. This use of material results in a closer bonding between thing and place, as close a bonding as that between the stone Parthenon and the rock of the Acropolis. This sharing of material and reciprocal nature of making something with the materials to hand is central to the thing's belonging in the clearing. Because of this sharing there is an identification formed between the things and the earth. The Naiku and Geku are of the forest, as the Woodland chapel is of the forest, as the Parthenon is of the hill.

Because of the things made in the clearing we are united to our existence, all men's existence. In each concrete form is a re-awakening of the constant in every culture, the axis to which all things align. Again the original archetypes are unified into a single thought, a single landscape; the earth in the form of the forest; the clearing into which all man's works are set, the hut which stands as dwelling and depository of values.



Image

*Ise; Prototype of Japanese Architecture, Kenzo Tange, MIT 1968,
p.150*

The shrines at Ise

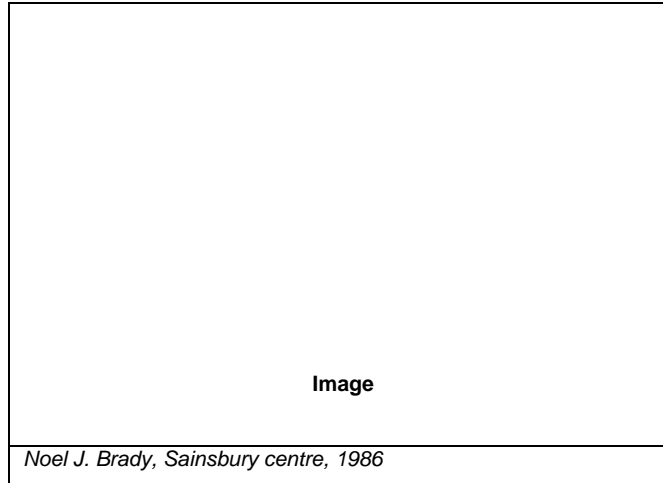
Conclusion

It would be wrong to conclude that these essentials, these truths to be found only in sacred places. On one hand it is true that it is more likely that these values are retained wherever there is spiritual continuity, such as in or near sacred sites. There is a much greater chance that the things themselves might be retained. Rilke is noted as saying that the things depend on us for their keeping.⁹⁷ Those things of greatest value are endowed with more attention and tend to last longer. Often we ascribe the label of art to these things. Truly Woodland and Ise are art, truly they are poetic in the manner I have illuminated, and truly they reinforce our belonging and enable our dwelling on this earth.

On the other hand there are other artefacts, even artefacts which have been created to day, incorporating a level of complexity unusual before the industrial revolution, that manage to be as poetic. In East Anglia, England there sits on a meadow between a university and a wood a building which houses a collection of art and artefacts. This building, the Sainsbury Centre of Art at the University of East Anglia by Norman Foster Associates, houses a collection which from many culture and eras.

Though it may not reflect literally an archetypal form, in terms of figure, construction or scale it is nonetheless archetypal in the true sense. The arching roof wraps the collection in an all-encompassing light. The artefacts of the collection are sheltered beneath this new sky, this reinterpretation of sky and ground.

⁹⁷ See the ninth elegy, *The Duino Elegies*, by Rainer Maria Rilke, 1923.



The Sainsbury Centre

Inside the visitor's relationship to the artefacts is most direct, without barriers or thresholds, the visitor can come close to the most ancient and precious of things inside another which shelters and binds all these things together. The poem is written here, the earth and world are united in a touch more sensitive than a child's. The unification is because of the thing. As Heidegger relates in his essay Building Dwelling Thinking that a place does not exist before the bridge but exists by virtue of the bridge, so it is here. By virtue of the centre, the 'treasury', a place is made also, it allows "a site for the fourfold".⁹⁸ As it is in Woodland and Ise the place of man is confirmed by the thing, confirming also for him his existence and his beliefs, anchoring his soul.

Because of these things we can live without fear in true well-being on this earth. From our most ancient origins to our most present of experiences we are united in one continuous culture of humanity. We succeed in dwelling poetically.

*"Behind the radiant sun lurked the fear inspiring darkness of the night.
In the cries of the forest, in the bowels of the earth, beyond the storm-
swept seas, unknowable spirits were at large. Man trembled before
the incomprehensible forces (ke) that filled primeval nature and
space."⁹⁹*

Kenzo Tange

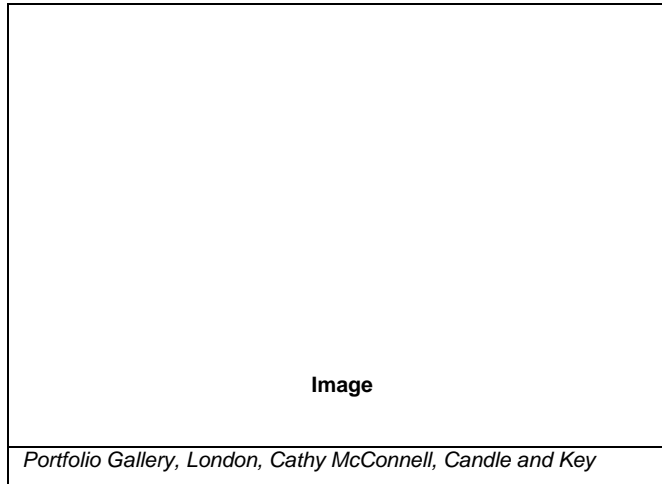
⁹⁸ Martin Heidegger, Building Dwelling Thinking, p.154, Poetry, Language, Thought, Harper and Row 1975

⁹⁹ Kenzo Tange, p.20, Ise, Prototype of Japanese Architecture, MIT Press 1965

TOWARDS THE POETIC

PART FIVE

FINAL WORDS



"The end of all our exploring will be to arrive at where we started and know the place as if for the first time."¹⁰⁰

T.S. Elliot

¹⁰⁰ T.S. Elliot

Introduction

All searches involve a path which delves a little into the undergrowth. Without guides the search often depends on glimpses of the path to enable each successive stage of the journey to be completed. When a stage of the journey has been completed there is often a period of looking back to reconfirm the place just left and to assure oneself of correct behaviour.

Beginning with mere glimpses, hunches and thoughts I began a path that has led me to places I did not know before. I have found that even though my path led me far I always felt near to my beginning. Often I would put it down to a lack of work, sometimes to ignorance and other times to actual truth. My path towards the poetic has confirmed for me the source of inspiration that predates all making, the state of being before the archetype comes into being, the spiritual archetype. This was a search for such beginnings, the search for origins that might guide us in this world of over production and over specialisation, particularly of useless things.

"Our vast system of education now vested in institutions, stems from these little schools; but the spirit of their beginning is forgotten."¹⁰¹

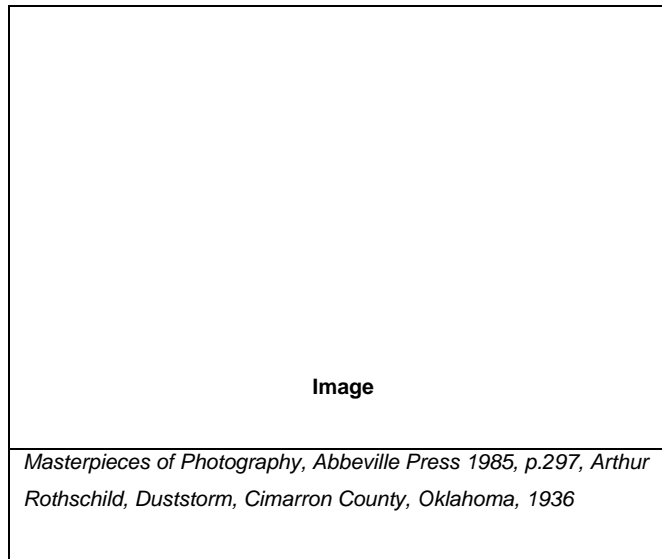
Louis Kahn

Inherent in the text above is an argument which is meant to lead us away from our worst excesses of our present culture. It is meant to provide a way of making things that is less to do with economic theories of production, political control or fashion and more to do with deeper relationships, a meaningful and active relationship to the earth.

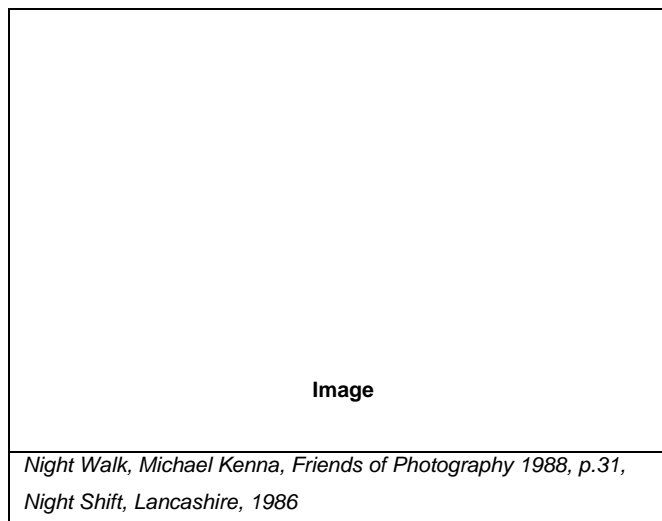
¹⁰¹ Louis Kahn, as quoted in article by William S. Huff which indicates Kahn's desire to discover the archetype. His search led to archetypes which built in a pure manner. His most successful projects are those that rise from that foundation. Little Journal, p.6, Society of Architectural Historians, September 1981

It seeks to avoid the ideological and stylistically debates which has brought incoherence to the city. Today the city resembles a pluralist zoo suffering under the onslaught of rival factions which seek to control the aesthetic nature of the world, while ignoring the deeper need of recognising the earth. While the debate continues to revolve around styles and ideologies this need will continue to be ignored.

The important question is not why we live but how we live. We have choices that far out-distance our brave hearts. It is within us to construct our world and thus ourselves. In our image, the world is built and we in it. We senselessly continue to build for us our own prisons that bind the conceivability of all being, its very possibility.



Our world need not be made up of artefacts which dominate nature, and by analogy man himself.
It need not be populated by deserts of our own making.



The factories and cities we have constructed mirror our existential condition in this destitute time.

The Death of Symbol

In Greek terms symbol meant a token of remembrance. In his essay, 'The relevance of the beautiful' Gadamer accounts for this origin and relates it to the token of hospitality given by a host to his guest.

"The host presented his guest with the so called tessera hospitalis by breaking some object in two."¹⁰²

Hans Georg Gadamer

He goes on to say that when the two pieces are reunited the bearer is again welcome, "we recognise someone already known to us".¹⁰³ The symbol is the bearer of memory, of recollection. It provides for us a path to the origin of thought, the origin of meaning, to a place where it was first used and understood. A facsimile is less likely to work than the original symbol since it is one step removed, clouding our recollection. A poor interpretation is worse still because it touches upon the mere outline of recollection. In either case the memory would not have been maintained as would befitting something valuable. Even something as fleeting and fragile as a memory deserves preservation if it has meaning for those within whose life it occurs.

In today's world much has been lost in the way of memory, because of war, because of the rewriting of history, because of colonialism, because of industry, because of a multitude of events and activities which have succeeded in distorting and manipulating our collective unconscious.

¹⁰² Hans Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, p.31, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays*, Cambridge University Press, 1986

¹⁰³ Hans Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, p.31, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and other Essays*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Image

*Ise; Prototype of Japanese Architecture, Kenzo Tange, MIT 1968,
p.105*

Image

*Between Silence and Light, John Lobelle, Samballa 1979, p.19,
Temple in Segesta*

If we would consider for a moment that things, which stand between the earth and the world stand also as symbol for man's existence, in that it serves as a token of remembrance between world and earth, it is the evidence of man's passage. We might also agree that the ancient buildings, some of which I have examined above, are precise symbols in the manner I spoke of. But there are symbols tied to a particular place. Therefore it would appear to me that to construct either a literal translation or even a poor copy of, for example, the Parthenon, in a different context¹⁰⁴, which has little to do with the original intent, location or people, is completely inappropriate. The Parthenon is of its place and could not be of any other, nor can it be separated from the other pieces of the composition that make up the Acropolis. Furthermore it might be argued that to use a way of thinking which is a symbol in another activity in the activity of making, e.g symbols within political or economic ideology, is also inappropriate.

Unfortunately we have present in the world of artefacts many ways of thinking which are totally inappropriate to making. Symbol as a word no longer holds the value it once had in Greece. No longer do we have a token of remembrance we have pretence towards meaning. In using what is at best a facsimile of a token we purport to be investing meaning in our works. However this is not so, for as we have seen meaning comes first only to be followed by myth and symbol. To arrive at symbol first is both misleading and highly dangerous, because it directs our eyes to our vanity, our desires for stature and position.

¹⁰⁴ Reference to Nashville, Tennessee, United States which erected a pristine white copy of the Parthenon in the town.

Image

Masterpieces of Photography, Abbeville Press 1985, p.377, Frank W. Gohlke, Landscape©Grain Elevators and Lightning, La Mesa, Texas, 1975

Image

Night Walk, Michael Kenna, Friends of Photography 1988, p.37, Chapel Cross Power Station, Study No.1, Scotland, 1985

Tokens and symbols come about from our direct relationship to the earth. These things witness the depth of our dialogue, our participation.

The death of symbol occurred, again, at the time of the industrial revolution. Instead of the artefact growing from people and place it became an international commodity of little cultural value. Though the Bauhaus recognised the danger and set about embracing the machine, hoping for a machine sensibility many were put off by the alien forms that suddenly appeared. Though some manufacturers produced 'modern' artefacts many concentrated on producing larger edition facsimiles of hand crafted artefacts. This represented the single biggest destruction of symbol we have witnessed. Even today the pill of high rise office developments and urban plans are being sugared with a facsimile of an original symbol.¹⁰⁵

The brutality and destruction experienced in World War II wiped out much of the optimism of the 1920's, based around the machine, until the 1960's and 1970's. By then symbol had been truly murdered by the industrial machine. Driven by profit, industry concentrated on production and quantity rather than quality or use. Successive attempts to re-establish symbol have been unsuccessful particularly when it has involved delving into the history books. Symbol comes from concerns held by the people themselves, in a place that is theirs, in a time that is theirs and no one else's. To be of our own time is to be of all time.

Our time is so destitute that we have no way of thinking about the things we make. Critical thinking in relation to the earth is lacking, demands for a realignment of values occurring only when there is a major environmental threat. The death of symbol is as much to do with the lack of values as it is to misuse of ancient symbols.

¹⁰⁵ In particular see Richmond Riverside development in London by Quinlan Terry which coats a new speculative office and residential development in Georgian clothing.

If these ancient symbols are of value they must be the inspiration of our own symbols. To understand them is to get beneath their skin as we have done with the artefact. There have been few people who understood the need for a rebirth of symbol in a form fitting our own time that the constant might be awakened in ever new things. Le Corbusier warned against the misuse of historical precedent;

*"The Plan proceeds from within to without; the exterior is the result of the interior. The elements of architecture are light and shade, walls and space. Arrangement is the gradation of aims, the classification of intentions."*¹⁰⁶

Le Corbusier

He goes on to warn against the mere introduction of formula or tricks to build. What he bemoans here is the lack of consideration for intent. Earlier he states that, "a question of morality; lack of truth is intolerable, we perish in untruth"¹⁰⁷.

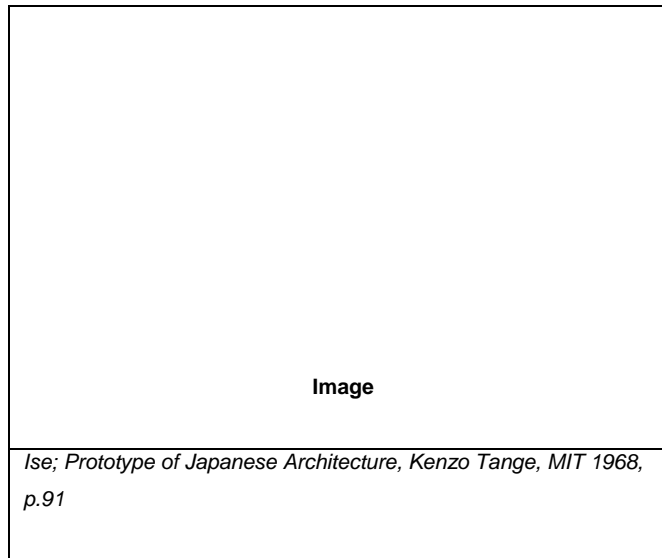
And like many he "looked to antiquity, to human genius and to notions of destiny to fill the void".¹⁰⁸

If we are truly to discover for ourselves the manner in which we would make something anew we must also undertake this personal search for our own beginnings. The rebirth of symbol in its essential form can only occur when placed into an essential mode of being where we can touch and be touched by the reality of the earth.

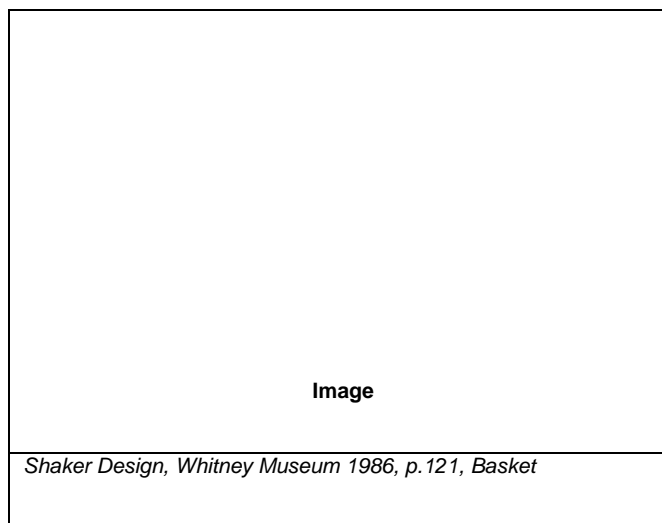
¹⁰⁶ Le Corbusier, p.177, Towards (a new) Architecture, Dover publications, 1986

¹⁰⁷ Le Corbusier, p.13, Towards (a new) Architecture, Dover publications, 1986

¹⁰⁸ Tim Benton, The sacred and the search for myths, p.239, Le Corbusier, Architect of the Century, Hayward Gallery 1985



We must return to our beginnings over and over again. Unless we understand the relay of culture we will not know what baton we must carry forward. To understand one must watch the race begin and wait for the appropriate moment to act, to take over the running.



Cycles of Thought

The thoughts here in this thesis are not radically new rather they are here by virtue of the many giants of thought who have live or still live on this earth. This work has confirmed for me the cycles of our earthly concerns. It has confirmed for me that we are always beginning again and again, that there is never any cessation, never death in a terminal sense, only rebirth in a different form, or transformation. It has confirmed for me that the incomprehensible can be surmounted by the poetic, that it, the poetic, is our true state of being on the planet.

"Beginning with the single thought that has no beginning, the multifarious things thus come to be. When you go and look carefully for its source, being a single thought with no beginning, you find that it has none at all. Having no origin at all, the birth of the infinite variety of things could be called a mystery."¹⁰⁹

Takuan Soho

But in the end what is learned from this search for a beginning that is an end of something else reborn? That there is no true origin or that all beginnings are the origin itself restated, rebirthed.

My intent was to find a way of making that bonded us to a place, that ensured our belonging, that allowed for dwelling in a fulfilled manner, a meaningful manner. What we have found is that these things are more readily at hand than would be imagined. Belonging is achieved in a very direct sense, dwelling by means of the poetic, or poesis.

¹⁰⁹ Takuan Soho, *The Clear Sound of Jewels*, p.75, *The Unfettered Mind*, Kodansha International, 1986

However though this has in some way concentrated on the artefacts themselves they must be left behind in our quest to belong. When the earth was revealed to Knut the forest, his axe and world became invisible, used up in the relationship of man and earth. To stop merely at the artifact would be a failure of intent. My intent is to go beyond the narrow confines of the physical. We live where our eyes linger and if the linger on the artifacts our lives will be confined by them.

*"But our approach is just to be concentrated on a simple basic practice and a simple basic understanding of life. There should be no traces to our activity. We should not attach to some fancy ideas or to some beautiful things. We should not seek for something good. The truth is always near at hand, within your reach."*¹¹⁰

Shunryu Suzuki

This is the foundation of what will be a lifetime's work. It is a beginning which has no end, my attempt to become, one day, a poet. I have identified the infinite as the place I mine my path. It is there I search out artefacts which aspire to thingness, which are poetic.

*"Things are specific possibilities identified in the infinite."*¹¹¹

F.W. Shelling

¹¹⁰ Shunryu Suzuki, p.65, Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, Weatherhill 1988

¹¹¹ F.W. Shelling

TOWARDS THE POETIC

APPENDIX

Image

*Nouvells Imagás, 1987, Ilse bing, Au Jardin du Luxembourg, Paris
1952*

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