To the not-forgotten ideals of integrity and dedication to an idea.
Title: Architecture As Cultural Expression
Identification: A Symposium for Students in the Humanities and Fine Arts located on the Greek Island of Thira in the Aegean Sea.
Credits: Professor Alfredo Missiaia - Architecture
Professor Enea Mendelssohn - Architecture
Professor Jack Wyman - Architectural
Mr. Leslie Smith - Landscape Arch.

Jack Wyman 8/1985
My Interpretation of an Architectural Thesis

Abstract - A Brief Summation

Inventory - Research Topics and Directions

Analysis - Combining Gathered Information With Empirical Knowledge

A Symposium for Scholarly Studies - A Qualitative Program for Them

Selected Theories - Generators of Planning and Design

A Design - Variation on a Theme

A Design - Final Drawings

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Personal Observations - A View Back to Them

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Contents
Talent that has not been submitted to discipline and hard work does not exist or deserve to exist. Nevertheless, effort and intense fatigue nurture the mind, the soul and a conscience striving towards a higher cultural awareness.

Aris Konstantinidis

My twenty-seven week thesis is geared toward a short investigation into specific interests I felt are important for the growth of the profession as well as my personal growth as an architect.

It must be realized that twenty-seven weeks is actually a very short time to study something with such significance, and is therefore to be used as an initial stepping-stone with the possibility of future study, beyond curriculum requirements, in a graduate level or in the application of federal and/or private grants.

It must also be understood that this initial stage of investigation is primarily filled with researching and understanding the scope of the thesis. This should include a very extensive collection of resources as well as an insight to probable related topics.
In an age of eclecticism, post-modernism, and meaningless stylistic gestures, architecture is in need of a direction that can speak to a more conservative society. The direction can be found by exploring the role of culture as a permanent and valuable resource towards a meaningful architecture.

William L. Feeney

B

I have collected and analyzed research pertaining to an architectural thesis which states that through in-depth research into a culture's attitudes, philosophies, and specific sociology, an architecture of real quality and meaning can be created. As a specific test example of my theory, I chose within the Greek Islands, the island of Thira. The architecture to exemplify the culture of Thira is a symposium for studies in the humanities. Scholars of philosophy, literature, and the fine arts are invited here for a three month period to discuss and research with others, the traditional and contemporary thinking of their area of interest.

Apartments are provided for the guests as well as community spaces indoors and out for research and intellectual stimulation. A director of the symposium is a permanent resident on the site. He runs all administrative tasks with the help of occasional personnel.

The symposium is to be concerned with providing an atmosphere that instills intellectual conversation and interaction with other guests in a variety of spaces. Informal and relaxed dinners and conversation are favored as well as privacy in the form of an apartment as a retreat.
Sequence of Movement/ Zoning

Zones are established by both cultures (Greek and American) in terms of public, private, and hidden, and each is arrived at by specific movement patterns. Notice the attitude from the public street. The American front yard is open to public view. The Thracian home, however, contains a visual barrier to the public. It is true that some American examples in cities do contain a small physical barrier in the form of a gate, but visual privacy is violated. Private areas of each culture are similar in the use of a separation into interior for sleeping areas (private) and the living/entertaining (semi-private). Kitchen area in the Greek example is thought of as a center of the house. The kitchen in the American example is thought of generally as a service space or hidden space.

Common to both cultures is the attitude towards closets, stairs, bathrooms, laundry rooms which are considered hidden spaces.
It is only through architecture that I can comprehend a culture.

Arthur Erickson

Use of Symbols

Both cultures differ greatly in this category in the way of decoration/ornamentation; but the end result is similar. There are different ways to evaluate the use of symbols. Architectural elements (wall, ceiling, floor, street, city) are known as fixed-feature elements and tend to change very rarely. In both cultures, these elements remain stationary except for expansion. The treatment of these elements is vastly different. The American example strives for individuality and attention in the way of coloring, textures, size, and edges. The Tibetan example is not concerned to exhibit individuality in this way. Applied ornament is rarely used in Tibet. On the other hand, American culture seems to depend on a pastiche type of ornament in the form of moldings, carvings, etc., inside and out.

The use of furniture and decoration (semi-fixed-feature elements) is highly instrumental in wearing individuality in both cases. They give clues to attitudes about a particular space in the house. They can also act as dividers or special organisms within a large space.

1,3 taken from Meaning of the Built Environment by Amee Raapant.
Natural elements such as plants, gardens, flowers, and trees are used as symbols in both cultures. The Thai example utilizes the vegetation in the form of multi-colored flowers displayed immediately inside the primary wall as a symbol of life within the house. This represents the primary use of color in the house.

American examples normally display a flower garden also, around a well cared-for house, which relates to pride (within a given peer group i.e., neighbors). Many times, a garden, more formal in nature, appears in the more protected rear yard of an American house.

Rituals/Philosophy of Living

Rituals relating to living patterns seem to give the most information when describing house form and arrangement. Eating, cooking, dining for example reveal that in the Thai house the kitchen is located in the center, common space in the house and dining occurs around the kitchen. Summer cooking and dining occurs outside to exhaust excess heat. The American example reveals a desire to separate kitchen from dining as a reflection of the service/work concept. Sleeping areas are normally kept separate from living areas in both cultures. A separation into different
Another characteristic of vernacular architecture is its additive quality, its unprescribed, open-ended nature, so different from the closed, fixed forms typical of most high-style design. It is this quality which enables vernacular buildings to accept changes and additions which would visually and conceptually destroy a high-style design. Vernacular is also characterized by the greater importance and significance of relationships between elements and the manner in which these relationships are achieved, rather than by the nature of the elements themselves.

Amer Rosenberg

books are desired. Pedestrians are expected and individual in both cases but the American example is occasional to larger rooms. Entertaining in America usually refers to that in the American culture a living room is normally considered the center of the house. Whereas in the Greek example, kitchen, living, dining are done in the same room. In Turkey, the men often go to a local cafe to socialize and the women stay at home and sit on the front door step and converse with neighbors. An American woman normally entertains inside her house.

These similarities and differences in attitude about procession, use of symbols, and values are the beginning to the understanding of the effect of cultures on design.
The Analysis—Combining Cultural Information with Empirical Knowledge

A door is not a door if it is locked, i.e. it becomes part of the wall.

The older and more times a wall is painted, the more the texture recedes into the depths of the paint.

Serving stones can give an idea of their age due to their smooth texture from wear.

William L. Feeney

Site Selection

Greece was chosen as a region due to its history as an example of a civilization that did and still does, promote philosophic thinking. Greece offers, as well as a wealth of cultural information, a feeling that is unlike most other places I have been. The environmental aspects of the Aegean Sea are very unique. The waters of the Aegean are more blue than ever imagined. The sky is also more blue due to the water's reflection. The sun seems to have been created solely for the purpose of shining here. The sharp and crisp quality of light produces the slightest of contrasts, moultings, and splashes on almost hauntingly crisp shadows.

Thassos was chosen for its history, beauty, and uniqueness among the Cyclades. A volcano erupted over 3,500 years ago which destroyed much of the island. This volcano was located in the center of the original island and all that remains of it is a small formation (caldera) penetrating the newly created bay. The island now smells of sulfur and the newly formed escarpment is almost vertical. This provides a sense of elevation when ascending almost 900 feet where the principal town of 2,000 people is located.

Another unique feature of the island is the ever-present reminder of its history in the form of black volcanic
The folk traditions are the direct and unself-conscious translation into physical form of a culture, its values and beliefs— as well as the desires, dreams, and passions of a people.

Anna Rapport

...from which the façades are composed.

The site selected on the island is located at a place that will allow possible interaction with the town and to allow privacy simultaneously. I feel it is important to expose the graves to a different environment to what they are accustomed to further stimulate thought about the contemporary versus ancient thinking. At this point I feel the site is far enough away from the town (There) to alleviate possible noise from cars and trucks, but close enough to allow interaction and direct contact with the people. There is a local bus that runs to the Aboretum (ancient Thera) daily and could be used to get to the town. Specific setting of the project reflects present settlement patterns of the island and permits a contextualism with the Greek culture. Naming and articulation of built forms are supported by the specific culture of Thera.
The Interior

This space inside the building, made of paper we decorate for our daily comforts, the small objects which fill our lives with warmth and nostalgia — this is the second skin and we allow no one, not even the least of artists, to face it on our. The architect creates the shell, the geometrical background, which is dead until its inhabitants fill it with life. But then does not relieve him of the obligation to give his house as full and intricate a form as possible, so that they become a well-modulated sounding-board for everyday life.

Rob Keir

Guest Apartments  200 m²

- good separation of public and private areas keeping in character with practices on the island.
- views are earned and not given away easily. This will keep the experiences of the site stimulating.
- plan and spatial organization reinfuses traditional Greek ideals and philosophies of living.
- limited stays are a maximum of three months.

Director's Residence  300 m²

- this is a private residence and is not job related.
- the emphasis is on relaxation and entertaining as well as the life on Thíkos.
- rotaway can be both formal and informal and are distinguished from residents.
- this is to be thought of as a personal retreat for the director.
If provision of shelter is the primary function of the house, then its primary purpose is the creation of an environment best suited to the way of life of the people — in other words, a social unit of space.

Anna Rapport

Community Spaces / Outdoor Spaces
- Quiet place to read and research — indoors or out.
- Formal (quiet) and informal (party) reading/studying promote interaction.
- Intimacy to spaces and site is provided for comfort as well as a contemplative atmosphere.
- Outdoor gardens allow casual conversation and discussion between guests.
- Lighting is controlled by canopy, vegetation, and shading devices that protect as well as enhance the space.
- Many areas are designed to group together or isolate so to accommodate many situations — microclimates.

Administrative Office 200 m²
- Business, organization of guest and schedules, take place here.
- Direct link to guests as well as the director.
- Meetings, discussions, dining, and presentations take place here in flexible spaces.
- Sun set is taken advantage of in all areas of the project.
The Wall

The most obvious, perhaps even most archaic, building technique is to lay stone on stone and thus to form an homogeneous, contracted mass. A long wall must either be thick enough to stand alone or it needs to be supported by a system of pillars, ribs and terracing, covering or network.

Prof. Krueck

Procession Analysis

1. public entrance
2. public open space
3. public court yard space
4. private open space
5. private entrance

area

plan

house form analysis for a typical house of Greek island region
Hence from analysis—back to the vaccine

Place from analysis—relationships to the courtyard

In both examples that can be seen a similarity to the monocular island heard on the previous page.

Variations on conceptual process
continued...

House form analysis - the Minoan influence

Early studies - The big head concept

variation

*Note: implied planes of recession

Early Studies
By using the first several forms of house as a generator for the complete expressions, the philosophies about proven, hierarchy, relationship to the whole by a unit, circulation to use, space definition, and natural light can be translated to each aspect of the program as well as the entire project to create a meaningful composition.
Neither one-sided nor simplification, nor
hand-down compromise offers a solution. The
search for a definite, clear answer that satisfies
opposite aims and needs is what takes architecture
out of the realm of abstraction and gives it life
and act.

Karel Dzuurc
A Design - Variation on a Theme

An honest builder should know both when to end an effort and when to begin one. Exalting obsessively on a project is dangerous, since the initial inspiration — without which nothing can be done — may wither away, causing the finished product to rot before it is seen.

Talent that has not been submitted to discipline and hard work does not exist or deserve to exist. Voluntary effort and fatigue mature the mind, the soul and a conscious striving toward a higher cultural awareness.

Aris Konstantinides

H

The final design, or at least at this stage of development, represents the culmination of all my research pertaining to this project as well as all that I have experienced. It is, as is true with all of my work, a part of me. It represents, also, my way of thinking, my values, my perception of existing aesthetics, my sense of scale, proportion and composition. It is me. It has evolved with the same intensity and vigor that created it.

The spirit from which this project was created will embody all of my future work as well. This is the responsibility of the architect.
A Design - Final Drawings
Conclusions and Reflections – Architecture in a New Light

True architecture, like any true art, has to be indigenous, not “International.”

Anic Konstantinidou

The House

This enclosing and protecting wall, the differentiation of rooms inside, windows as source of light, doors as entrances and exits, the roof to keep out the rain and cold... all these, thematically, technically or in the architectural aesthetic made no longer to be called into question today. The unconscious with which a deep-rooted tradition, down even to the craftsman’s skills, was destroyed in the 1920’s has left wounds that will never heal. We must start again, learning to build from the fundamentals.

Rot Kehn

This book represents not just an omission—gathering of my findings. It is much more than that to me. This book represents a new way of thinking about architecture. It has taken me toward a more meaningful direction in which I am to evaluate my previous work as well as that to come. It must be understood that I am not claiming to be a designer of vernacular architecture. That is a contradiction in terms. Vernacular architecture is not designed. Or at least not in the same sense. I have adopted a way of thinking which allows me to use the philosophies and principles of vernacular architecture to design for today. The simplicity of all aspects of life found in Tibet is inspiring. I am not referring necessarily to the lower level of technology. I am more concerned with the living habitats and habitats. The sensitivity, human scale and human lifestyle allows a relatively simple from the capacity to answer to the person-by-its-specific culture.

It is these ideas, that of meaningful architecture, which I am stressing. An architecture which is full of life and has a strong basis for such vitality.

William C. Forsyth
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