DESIGN AS A MISSION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS
PAUL MATTHEWS ARCH 406

DOOR FOR A SOLDIER
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AN OVERVIEW

In common usage "architecture" is an honorific. It denotes excellence in building. In fact architecture is something quite different from building. The distinction has been done near to the point of nausea, but it will bear repetition. An analogy can be drawn with painting: As a house is painted from floor to ceiling, but only a few select areas are "paintings"; a city is composed entirely of buildings, but only a few are (properly) "architecture".

Building is generic construction. Architecture is purposeful construction.

Architecture wedds intention to material and process. (Note: "material" here is construction material as well as function.) It expresses its users' broad intentions by manipulating their immediate spatial needs. In doing this, it rejects the artist's subjective inspiration, yet allows the programmed task-at-hand to be the subject of artistic invention. This is a form of half-reason a method of thinking apart from the artist's or craftsman's.

In the twentieth century the unique architectural impulse has been misplaced. Architecture has become synonymous with problem-solving, construction management (rational concerns) or, at best, esthetic sensitivity.

The following description illustrates the essential difference between architecture and problem-solving.

The plan on the left represents architecture.** Formal and spatial concerns are preeminent. The individual enters, penetrates the space, and indicates his status: right or left. In the process, he performs. The drama of day-to-day life is the subject of the space.

**I do not offer these sketches as proofs, only illustrations. I believe they reveal two differing attitudes about event and space, as well as a slight interest in one lacking in the other.

* The artist is responsible only to himself. His initial impetus (inspiration) is totally subjective. The craftsman completes an assignment. An architect also completes an assignment. However, he feels free to interpret the task as he fulfills it. (Reference: Frank Lloyd Wright's interpretation of the spatial needs of the Unitarians in Unity Temple, Oak Park.)
The plan on the left figures design. Circulation is considered a generator. How the space functions is of paramount importance. The fallacy that a home can be made to function efficiently (be a machine for living) has produced a sterile environment. Conversation flows along in well greased grooves. This scheme is merely aapid building. Yet it represents the architecture of today. How did this state of affairs come to pass? The answer lies in the course of the last century and the nature of modernism.

Modernism has been defined as "the notion that the critical act can become a part of the discipline of creation." In this sense, modern art may be called "meta-art" because it concerns itself with the fundamental nature and purpose of art in general rather than the specific character of the artifact in particular. The typical (self-conscious) modern artist interprets his work as he creates it - a process which, of necessity, excludes all which cannot be stated (and thereby critiqued) explicitly. Process is inculcated into subject matter, leading to the emphasis of idea (or act) over artifact.

To this view, Marcel Duchamp is the quintessential modern artist, as he affected a redefinition of art without recourse to creative, or esthetic, sensibility. He focused on art, eschewed the artifact, and achieved the consummation so "devoutly wished" by Hamlet.

In this respect and with regard to the other arts, architecture is at a disadvantage. It necessarily involves substance and enclosure; and so defies dissolution. None the less, Ludwig Mies van Der Rohe found enough success with universal equations to comment: "Now that I have designed architecture; architects may design buildings." This self-appraisal has been seconded at one time or another by most architects (just look around you) including Alvar Aalto, who commented upon a visit to Crown Hall: "I already knew what it looked like." (Possibly the highest compliment to be paid a work of modern art.)

Mies began his quest for a truly modern architecture (quite properly) by locking on process. "We do not recognize problems of form, only problems of building." In this, most of the great modern architects followed his lead. It is in this regard, that the definitive modern architect would have to be Malcolm Wells. By advocating radical environmental determinism, Wells eliminates, at least, the formal component of architecture. Modern architects in general follow similar plans of attack whether they defer to structural, behavioural, or generic rational determinism. (Nervi, Erskine, and Pei, respectively, come to mind.) In tandem with this cannibalizing effect on modernism, two historical events helped form present "contemporary" building design.

Two points are important here: 1) The fact that modern art is couched in generalities, global in scope and, therefore, lacks the specificity that allows depth. (Reference: Henry James' "case" vs. "situation". Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe vs. the Mona Lisa.) 2) The fact that the subject of creation in modern art is the act of creation - a redundancy that results in sterility. (Reference: Duchamp's ready-mades.)
First of all, the licensing of architects in the late nineteenth century led to the institutionalization of certain aesthetic values. Where architects saw themselves as professionals—servants to a client. Economy of means and materials as well as efficiency of design became primary motivators. Furthermore, with the establishment of a professional organization, the marketing of architecture necessitated an emphasis on saleable qualities—quantifiable attractions, such as dollars or man-hours saved.

Secondly, the belief (which originated in Germany in the 13th century) that buildings would one day be mass produced in factories and architecture (as well as all the handcrafts) would be rendered obsolete led toward a push to put the architect in charge of the machine. This movement culminated in 1919 with the establishment of the Bauhaus where architects eschewed methods of artistic assemblage in favor of generic principles of design.* Enter architecture as a problem-solving art.†

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*I do not want to oversimplify the case. The Bauhaus sprung from many sources, not the least of which were: a vision of socialist utopia, a machine aesthetic, and the peculiar personalities of its founders. I focus on a concern over the role of the machine in architecture only because it brought about a particular process (determinism) which was an attempt to make the architect less vulnerable to obsolescence by linking him to more legitimate scientific disciplines: engineering, psychology, ecology, and so on.

† The difference between early and late modernists has already been explained, but to put it succinctly: The early modernists manipulated process as a consequence of expression; the late modernists expressed the consequences of their process.
A building must have utility. If not, it is either a piece of sculpture, or an instrument of torture. Buildings grow out of need, and in doing so constitute a response. Paradoxically, however, the primary purpose of architecture is not to fulfill the need which produces it. As poetry (the imaginative use of language) is as concerned with expression as communication, architecture involves both action and reaction. It is subverted response, the exploitation of need.

Wasps’ nests are beautiful, wonderfully expressive of materials and structure, well proportioned, and superbly functional. Nevertheless, they are not architecture. A wasp nest says nothing of the experience of flight, the taste of the air, or the spirit of the brood. A wasp responds mechanically to need, behaving rationally (or at least reasonably) by instinct. It could be said that man is distinguished from animals by his ability to act irrationally. He needs to build, but he desires to complicate that building. He needs to respond; he desires to create. This gives rise to the historical development of architecture.

Thousands of years ago, the aboriginal inhabitants of Ireland were faced with the problem of providing a structure to support a pyre. Although wood was abundant and stones were disposed for use, they chose the extravagantly irrational solution of dolmen. They raised mounds of earth, dragged boulders up their slopes, and set one great horizontal slab over several smaller vertical ones. The corpse was cremated on the large stone. The remains were interred underneath. Today the dolmen stands as a marker. It mirrors the prone position of the corpse and the vertical stance of the survivors. It cuts a profile against the sky and casts a shadow over the grave. It speaks of power and powerlessness. It links us to long forgotten builders.

"In all of my past work, my endeavor has been to show that good architecture is essentially religious. But in the course of doing this I have had to show that good architecture is not ecclesiastical. I hope, now, that there is no danger of your misunderstanding me - when I repeat that every great architecture has been the result and the exponent of a great national religion." - John Ruskin

We generally distinguish between architecture and construction on the basis of our perception of the builder’s intentions. If those intentions are noteworthy, the building is considered architecture. If they are mechanical, common, or reflexive: the building is judged accordingly.

Consequently, it is not at all surprising that the great architectural achievements of the past were inspired by, and propagated for, great social, political, or religious movements:

The Greek sculptor/architects graced a column by allowing it to swell under a load. The implicit anthropomorphism reaffirmed the desirability of the human form. It edified traditional values.

The Gothic builders assumed that two ascendant arches aspired to heaven. Their terminus became the trefoil, a symbol of the holy trinity.
The Arts and Crafts reformers saw the joint between two windows as the opportunity for a "tool" (the mason) to become a "man". The detailing was left to the workman.

Today, by way of contrast, buildings are largely essays in building-craft. Architects assert the hegemony of architecture. They "solve problems" of baffling complexity, bring off near-perfect displays of architectural virtuosity, and find their work met with a yawn, or simply ignored. It is not purely coincidence that modern architecture began to lose its popularity as it about-faced from social egalitarianism to economic expediency:

"The philosophical attitude which underlines the Penguin Pool and a number of buildings I designed at the time was based on a rationalistic conception. The affirmation in terms of composition of a certain order and rationality of human relations that has been proven quite wrong. The aims of that time have not materialized as a whole. My personal interpretation is that these buildings cry for a world which has never come into being. Therefore their continuation seems a paradox inasmuch as they are uncompromisingly inimical to the state of mind of our society as we know it." - Berthold Lubetkin

The "sterility" of modern architecture applies to both the austerity of the aesthetic and its extremely limited scope. The popular phrase, "architectural solutions for architectural problems," is underwritten by the stark realism that equates architecture with materialsgeometryjoints. Modern building stands for itself, by itself; and speaks only to itself. Architecture is not coincidentally beautiful, as is a wasps' nest; but decidedly beautiful, as are works of art.

"What finally decides the form of a dwelling, and molds the spaces and their relationships, is the vision that the people have of ideal life ... buildings are less the result of individual desires than of the aims of the unified group for an ideal environment. They therefore have symbolic value, since symbols serve a culture by making concrete its ideas and feelings." - Amos Rapaport

Thesis: Architectural forms are symbols and mechanisms for their users' aspirations. Architecture expresses belief as a mission of the environment. (You shall know them by their fruits. Matt. 7:16)
A PROJECT

The thesis defines architecture in terms of its content. It does not prescribe a domain of appropriate subject matter, or describe the process by which content is expressed. It states only that modern architecture, in general, and the problem solving approach, in particular, draw content from the act of expressing content - a cannibalism that results in the sterility of contemporary design.

The following suburban house results from a conscious attempt to express the actions and attitudes of suburban life in physical form. (To develop a house that is a symbol and mechanism of its users' aspirations.) The reader should study the drawings and attempt to interpret them (what does this house say?). An explanation of the intended content and a brief description of the process will follow. The thesis is useful to the degree that the project communicates.

You may draw your own conclusion.
INTERPRETIVE DRAWINGS OF SUBURBS
SUGGESTED OVERRIDING IDEAS AND ATTITUDES
ABOUT BUILDINGS AND THE LAND. EARLY
DESCRIPTIVE WORK OF THIS NATURE BECAME
OVERLY INVOLVED AND SELF SERVING. A
METHOD OF PAIRING EACH OBSERVATION WITH
AN EXPlicit (EVEN IF ULTIMATELY IRRELEVANT)
ARCHITECTURAL PROPOSITION WAS EMPLOYED.
THE RESULT OF THIS PROCESS WAS A SET
OF BUILDING COMPONENTS THAT LAYED HOLD
OF ONE ANOTHER TO FORM A HOUSE. NO
COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK WAS NECESSARY.
THE INDIVIDUAL PIECES "KNIT" OF THEIR OWN
ACCORD.
GRASS IS LIFE MADE STERILE. A GREEN
NO MAN'S LAND AROUND WHAT BECOMES A
POWERFUL, CARBONISH & MALEVOLENT FORCE.
The stage is set for an extended false front, usually symmetrical without being imposing, inscrutable at a scale that could be read without difficulty.

The archetypal house form is retained. Private areas are pushed into the sky and literally "screened" with wire mesh (spray painted near sleeping areas) in these areas. Functional elements such as downspouts are screened from prying eyes. In the lower formal composition a clear hierarchy of function goes through the motion of concealment.
The floor plan follows inevitably from the porch. The front room is transfigured into a spatial slip housing its user's finest possessions. Living and dining, ritualized, meet exterior, brutally. The accent is steep and direct. Servant spaces are pragmatic. The heart of the house, of course, is the garage—elevated and alone, subdivided, bilaterally. Formal and neat in front, rambling and digres me to the rear. Flooring materials re-enforce internal significance. Fattening in flooring, stenciling on walls read ad ad tract hieroglyphics.
THE PLAN IS EXPANDED TO REALISTIC DIMENSIONS
WHAT HAS BEEN SEEN AS AN ESSAY ON SUBURBAN
LIVING BECOMES A VIABLE HOME. FINE TUNING
DICTATES A NEW LEVEL OF DETAILING.
INTERPRETIVE DRAWINGS ARE ABANDONED IN
FAVOR OF HARD LINE DRAWING. ARCHITECTURAL
CONVENTIONS ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED.
MOST OF THE WORK CONTINUES IN 3/4 SCALE
WALL SECTIONS.
The upper level opens to the rear after being secured in front. The trafficked envelope spills out to one side and is carefully displayed inside on the other.

To this display side all elements—chimney, stair, vault, hall—are cartooned. The opposite elevation moves out in front of its functions opening up and masking with mirrored glass. It signifies the "side" of the house with a literal section. An unusual backdrop to the outdoor living area. The second level plan itself is spare & compact.
SIDE WALL SECTION
GARDEN WALL SECTION
GARDEN WALL SECTION
A STUDY

The following study was undertaken in order to evaluate and clarify the proposition. (Did it amount to a bland cliche, or could it be used to generate a product?)

The building studied is a dining hall for a spiritual/communitarian group. It is an appropriate subject for study because it was designed by an engineer who addressed only the most pragmatic issues and because its users have not, as of yet, developed an iconography. It served as a sort of "control" building, a neutral structure over which architectural expressions could be overlaid and viewed.

The following description of the building, its users, and their environment was written by Susan Blodgett.
I came to a crossroads in my early adulthood when I looked at another person and said, "It is not a question of whether you are the right one for me, but it is the fact that we are one, as all our human family is, and that our being together serves to prove it out." That was the beginning of my marriage and also the beginning of a 10 year adventure in community which is yet unfolding.

Acting from the premise that "we are one" is nitty-gritty work, both invigorating and deeply satisfying. Very soon after our marriage, my husband and I met a couple who had attended classes offered by the Society of Emissaries. We ourselves attended several such classes and experienced a deep sense of kinship with this group of people.

The Emissaries are an association of two to three thousand people around the globe who are concerned to give practical everyday expression to the spirit of oneness. The basic premises shared by the Society are that our oneness as a human family stems from our common divine being, and that as an individual, I am responsible for expressing and experiencing that divine being—no one or nothing else has that responsibility for me. Beyond those basic premises, there are no beliefs or rules, just a wide open invitation to live together wherever you find yourself, proving out what you know to be true with no excuses! Obviously this takes being conscious and deliberate.

The mainstream of the Society of Emissaries is a regular mailing which addresses in a fresh, current way the internal atmosphere which accompanies such an approach to living. Emissary "services" are held weekly to consider these mailings and the basic theme of conscious, deliberate living.
While most associated with the Society of Emissaries live in typical configurations, i.e. singly, as couples, or as nuclear families, many live together in centers varying in size from two or three to over one hundred. Living in community usefully intensifies the process of proving out our oneness in practical ways and also creates a location and atmosphere for services, classes, and special gatherings.

My husband and I have lived in such centers for the last eight years. Three and a half years ago we were invited to assist in the coordination and farming of Rainbow Farm outside of Muncie, Ind. Rainbow Farm is the central facility for the Society of Emissaries in the Midwest. We had visited Rainbow numerous times; it was home away from home. We delightedly accepted the invitation as the next step in our adventure and moved here with our two children in January of 1982. Since then, we have given birth to our third child.

Physically, Rainbow Farm blends with the rural Indiana landscape although our large passive solar dining hall does catch one's eye while driving down the narrow country road! There are 326 acres of land, 80 wooded, 320 cultivated/pastured, and 16 acres surrounding our dwellings. The terrain is slightly rolling with the White River as our western border. There is a relaxed quiet feel in this countryside not unlike the drawl in voices of our local friends.

Bill and Betty Hudson, native Hoosiers themselves, bought the property in 1963 with plans to retire here. In the early 1970's they met the Society of Emissaries and in 1974 decided to donate the land as a site for an Emissary community. They continue to live here and to participate actively. Gradually others came to join the Hudsons. Currently there are thirty individuals living at Rainbow Farm, ages newborn to ninety. Most of us originate from the midwestern
United States. All who live here had some prior association with the Society of Emissaries. Many have come for a "season," staying several years and then moving on, finding living at Rainbow an assistance in their personal growth. In balance with those, there are others who are more settled—having been here eleven years, eight years, six years—thereby providing a continuity in the community.

While the land and dwellings are owned by the Society of Emissaries, which is a non-profit corporation, each member of the community takes responsibility for his or her own finances. Those who work off the farm pay rent, and those who work on the farm receive a salary tailored to their individual needs.

Over the years accommodations have expanded with the increased number of residents. An old farmhouse was renovated and used as a dining hall and main living quarters. A trailer and three large modular homes were purchased and put in place. A passive solar sanctuary was built followed several years later by a similarly designed dining hall and living area. The old farmhouse became our family's home at that time. Most of the married couples have their own homes while the single adults share homes or apartments having their own rooms. We all squeeze together when large groups of guests arrive!

We do have a steady flow of visitors. Some come just to get acquainted with us and the Society of Emissaries. Others are long-time friends coming for a quiet time or to participate in the activities around the community. We offer Art of Living weekend and week-long seminars on a regular basis as well as hosting seminars and gatherings in such areas as business, fine arts, education, health, etc.

The daily pattern of our coming together as a community consists of sharing
our noon and evening meals in our dining hall. We find this rhythmic gathering a cohesive backdrop to our diverse individual activities. Eight of our number are employed in the surrounding community in jobs ranging from a radio station sales manager to a doctor of chiropractic. A catering business is operated out of our kitchen facility. We farm our land with care to regenerate the soils within economic limits. On the home scene, we are occupied with mechanics, carpentry, secretarial and book work, cooking, caring for our beef and dairy cows, housekeeping, gardening, childcare, etc.

Participation in the work needing to be done in the community is on an individual basis depending on expertise and physical condition. My husband and I are responsible for coordinating the work. We amass all the variables (and some days there are a lot!) of who is available, when, for what, and what jobs need to be done. Then we plan out the next day. Our direction of others is on the basis of shared friendship and a willingness to work together, the spirit of which is agreed upon in coming to live on Rainbow Farm.

We currently have six children among us. The younger children spend most of their time with their mothers although we share their care when moms need to fulfill other responsibilities. The older children attend public school. We see their time at school as but a fraction of their whole education for which we as parents are responsible. Rainbow community experience is rich in friendships among all ages and in space to "be"—vital ingredients for growing children. Seven of our community members are over fifty-five. Their participation is of a quieter nature, but they are integral to all areas of the community.

Along with the work activities, music is an important ongoing aspect. Two individuals devote a full half of their time to music, classical music in particular. This adds a refined element to our home atmosphere.
Initially the focus of the community was internal with our energy devoted largely to gardens, preserving food, daily housekeeping, considerations among ourselves and the like. An individual's time priority was to be home and participating in community activities. As time has proceeded, that focus has shifted more externally. There is still the home to be maintained, but individuals' time priorities are frequently with careers and activities in the greater community from PTO to Symphony. As a balance is struck (and this is occurring!), there is an increased sense of vitality.

A number of people from the surrounding community have been coming to Rainbow Farm for various functions. We have been holding gourmet dinners with musical entertainment every few months. Currently we are hosting a series of meetings where friends we have met in the area are speaking of their experiences of the rising tide of change in the world. We have begun annual Visitors' Weeks and have had a number of open houses.

There was a time, I think, when we tended to see ourselves as different because we lived in a community, and indeed there are distinctions. But in fact, there are no elements here at Rainbow Farm—from planning together to caring for a baby to having a touch of arthritis—that are not present throughout our whole human family. More realistically we are representative in microcosm of our larger global family.

As individuals we have chosen to consciously align our expression with our divine being. To the degree we are each doing this, we bring the magic of creation to our community experience. Inherent in divine being is blessing. On its deepest level the purpose of Rainbow Farm is to be a blessing.
DESCRIPTION OF LIFE IN THE DINING HALL

By Susan Blodgett

This building's presence in our community is central. How the building fulfills that central role has changed and continues to change rapidly.

The building is the location for our inter-community life as well as our public face. We eat our meals together here and hold our regular weekly meetings. It is the one gathering place where we all come together regularly. It is the first building which one comes to upon entering the property and the location of all our public meetings, special dinners, and events.

When first designed, the downstairs rooms were meant to be offices and music practice areas. Before the building was half completed the community had grown in numbers and the rooms were used as living quarters. They were first moved into by a number of those working on the building itself. Because of their design as offices it has been a challenge to transform them into a home. They were named the Garden Apartments to emphasize their function. Over three years after having first been moved into and after the addition of a new central living room with an insulated wall to block the sounds coming from the basement area, these rooms are beginning to take on a home atmosphere. We look to enhancing the entrances to this living area with landscaping and paths to assist in furthering their home function. Perhaps someday these rooms will be used for offices or strictly guest rooms. For now it seems that whoever lives in these rooms must be fully enmeshed in the central aspects of the community. It is not a quiet spot set aside but rather a high energy location where one is literally in the crossroad of the community.

The basement area was left unfinished when the rest of the building was completed. It has been fun to see this space take on essential functions as the needs became apparent. The planned root cellar has become the food and supply pantry. (A dirt basement of another dwelling was already suited for root crops and so is serving that function.) Large sinks have been installed as well as a water distiller, shelves for drying milking equipment, 2 washing machines, and several dryers. And of course the area becomes the spot to "put things." Thus we find the need to continually clean and sort through the furniture and boxes of things which rest in the large basement area. With the furnace, dryers, water heaters and condensers from the freezer all in this area, it is quite warm year round as well as noisy—a bit too noisy to be a useful work space for extended periods of time. Moving the condenser outside or building a soundproof wall around it has been considered and would allow the area to be used for more special projects such as collating, crafts, and so forth.

The kitchen too has been changed and taken on an increasing number of functions. We moved from a community kitchen which was smaller than the foyer of this new building into a very large commercial kitchen! At first everything took three times as many steps. With time and help from a cook among us who had worked in large kitchens before, we have rearranged the location of utensils and minimized our steps. A little less than a year ago we added to our own meal preparation a catering business operating out of the kitchen. This catering business includes the sale of nuts and so we also have a weighing operation in our kitchen. With the advent of this for-profit business the kitchen was inspected by the Health Department and is now a licensed commercial kitchen. We've always seen the kitchen as central to the home atmosphere of the community. This means valuing the quality of relationship between us as we cook, do dishes, or work in our catering business. To the degree there has been open communication and energetic cooperation, this home atmosphere has filled our new kitchen. Continual flexibility (who does what, where and how?) is required.
The dining room/meeting room gets more than its share of changes. We joke about how quickly and unobtrusively we can transform the room back and forth—sometimes six times in one day on a weekend when a seminar or special gathering is meeting for sessions in the room as well as sharing three meals there.

The acoustics have been a challenge in the room, with the large slanting ceiling and high walls. Over time we've accumulated more pictures, furniture, and drapes which has all helped. There is the thought of adding some acoustical tile pieces high up on the walls. However we found during our most recent gathering of 165 (capacity crowd) that the noise did not seem to be as loud as previous times. This was a function no doubt of the increased drapes but I suspect more largely a function of the ease with which we could handle that large a group. We've found that the noise level in the room is often a result of excitement on everyone's part, shouting above each other. And so we continue to work with the noise from the standpoint of providing a calming element and of placing sound absorbing articles on the walls.

We have a small living room on one end of this dining room which serves as a resting and waiting area as well as a place to play for the children after meals. The room is daily the site of music practice as a baby grand piano is located there. The acoustics are quite nice for this!

There is one function which occurs daily in our dining room which is close to my heart and symbolic of our use of the building as a community. That is our evening blessing when at the end of our supper meal we hold hands around the tables and one person stands and verbally gives thanks for all that has brought us to that moment. In that time I always am aware of the incredible fullness, liveliness and fluidity of our community life and life in general. This building is a useful container for this life.

As I write this description, consideration is being given to an appropriate name for the building. Since its construction we've referred to it as the Dining Hall, which often left us thinking of camp or a college campus. It would seem more appropriate to call it a center or the center from the standpoint of the community. As we are located about a mile north of a beautiful reservoir called Prairie Creek Reservoir, consideration is being given to the name Prairie Creek Center. Continual change! And there is no stopping it.
The existing entry stair is a skeletal arrangement of stick-like elements. Wood can be considered an appropriate material here, as it is a renewable (and therefore "responsible") resource, responding to (and therefore acknowledging the significance of) the physical characteristics of man (i.e., it is warm to touch, can be tooled, retains smells, decays and weathers within his lifetime). The composition is disjoint. As the first note in the melody of the building it could become a symbol for the "oneness", so important to the group. Unfortunately, as it now stands, it speaks only of the literal facts of its construction.

A continuous running board could knit the individual pieces into a whole. It would provide a dynamic symmetry which would point to more significant activities within (especially if the progress of the board were emphasized by an increasing saturation in hue).
At present, the entry door is a simple barrier. It could become a "trigger" for the sudden realization of the "oneness" of the divine human.

From the exterior the door remains an inscrutable barrier. As it opens, it exposes the underlying interrelation of parts, which combine to make a functioning unit of four seemingly discrete panels.
The thesis redefines unusual areas as of "architectural" concern.

The doorknob's place in the scheme can be exaggerated. It could uncouple elaborate male-female closers. The knob itself is a spliced cylinder. A simple geometric form manipulated to almost conceal its origin.
The dining/meeting hall takes on a wedgelike character. Appropriately, the transparent open end seems to include all the world. In contrast, the closed end becomes a focus. This relationship is muddled by the stage, which is located along the West side of the space.

The relationship is clarified fully by moving the stage.
In order to underscore the importance of the focused wall, it becomes heavy and massive - "weighty" concrete block infill supports drywall backdrop. The common construction materials belie attempts to identify a lifestyle with a religion, or confine it to "finer" spaces.
The upper windows in the open wall are horizontally oriented. They war against a space and ideology that is outwards and up.
A single pane within the vertically diverted window becomes a receptacle for a prism. The prism is a symbol for the unity of what appear to be disparate parts (the bands of the spectrum). The prism dangles, casting its colored shadow on various places of the "focused" wall during dining and services. The thesis forces architecture to accept and create icons.
The rear door is irregular, chaotic. The event of the door could be used to generate an elevation.
The East end wall of the space fronts on a serving room.
The fruits of labor are distributed there. The community comes
together to enjoy them.

The structural support for the room also "comes together".
The structure is revealed after being ordered by larger diagonal
elements.
Heavy timber supports become visible symbols for the cooperation and underlying unity on the farm.
A single skylight tops the construction, punctuating the statement.
APPENDIX B
THE SEARCH

As this is an undergraduate thesis, the effort is aimed at developing a personal understanding of a process and not at formulating principles.

Work began in September 1984 with research into anarchists and agrarian communes. It progressed from there to a communitarian settlement in Indiana and finally moved onto the American suburb.

It would be pointless to include the fascinating, but ultimately irrelevant, search and study that went into the early stage of the work. However, some key observations have been singled out here. This appendix offers them in a view of the emerging thesis.
Over the course of twelve years William Lethaby produced six buildings which comprise his entire output as an architect. These buildings, however, exert an influence far out of proportion to their number and lend substance to the somewhat misty ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement. In recognition of this achievement, the Royal Institute of British Architects awarded Lethaby their 1924 Gold Medal Prize. He declined the honor, citing the previous nonacceptance of his mentor John Ruskin:

The primary objective of all such institutes is to exalt the power of their own profession over the minds of the public, power in the present century being synonymous with wealth.

To Lethaby (as to Ruskin) morality was inseparable from artistic activity. Architecture (the "soul" of building) existed to advance a rational and egalitarian world order. Beauty was merely the recognition of the artist's admirable intentions:

The outward and the made must always be exact pictures of the mind of the maker. Man builds buildings so that buildings will build his sons.

Lethaby's ideal building would express a structural and functional truth somewhat softened by the introduction of moralistic iconography and evidence of the hand of man.

The Eagle Insurance Company building strips down classical elements to wraithlike form. Cornices and columns are refigured in rational order. Classical capitals rise over three-sided half-octagonal piers. Cornice lines become functional ledges. Eyebrow arches make a restrained statement of entry. Attic and base are
expressed functionally; that is, the attic appears closed and monolithic, while the base appears light and skeletal. Flanking windows take on the shrunken dimensions of the doors below them in a structural expressionism. Attic ornament is figured with a random circular motif evocative of the fall of raindrops. A stone eagle perches above the roof. Fenestration is expressive of the structural grid, embellished with pure geometric ornamentation: arc and triangle.

In the building Lethaby establishes a continuity with the past, then redirects traditional elements towards a new ideal:

Behind every style of architecture there is an earlier style, in which the germ of every form is to be found; except such alterations as may be traced to new conditions, or innovating thought or religion...

This subversion of historicist ornament is nowhere as evident as in Lethaby's greatest work.

The All Saints church Brockhampton, Herefordshire, conforms to the basic medieval Herefordshire model. It adopts the somewhat more idiosyncratic element of the crossing tower, but is otherwise quite traditional. Local stone and thatch are utilized. A wide variety of other materials are also incorporated: concrete, weatherboarding, rubble buttressing. Gothic feeling windows are found in the South facade. A retilinear diaper grid is superimposed on the North transept. A stair tower was designed by craftsmen on-site, and takes on a haphazard medieval appearance.
Thick chamfered gothic arches spring low on the walls, bringing the heavenly gothic ceiling down within the reach of an enlightened man.

All in all, the building represents an enlightened Gothic transfiguring traditional Gothic precedents in new order.

All Saints Church, Brockhampton, Herefordshire

The Eagle Insurance Building, Birmingham
The Synanon group combines an extremely communal lifestyle with an intensely personal one. Both ends of the spectrum are reinforced: privacy with isolation; community with "the game", a marathon group encounter session.

An original design for Synanon City, by Ellis Kaplan, featured a grand central space framed with prefabricated steelwork. Kaplan intended the design to be self-helped, reasoning that the group would save money and develop a sense of community. The problem solving approach failed. The group preferred to live in a mass of sheds and shanties on the side of a steep hill.

A second design, also by Kaplan, was modeled on the existing structures. It consisted of a jumble of insulated "caves" connected by secluded private passageways. The idea was enthusiastically received by the group. It addressed the proper notion of privacy and structured community, without the anonymity of the "public". It symbolized and facilitated Synanon life.

"More or less concurrently with the caves, Kaplan built a commodious house for Dederich (Synanon founder) and his wife. During its programming it seemed reasonable to everyone at Synanon... But after trying to live in the new house Dederich converted it to caves for himself and his senior staff... The abandonment of the Dederich house should have surprised no one. With the clarity of hindsight, nothing could be more obvious than the fundamental contradiction between Synanon's idea and the single-family house. Today, the detached dwelling symbolizes the anathema that Synanon will combat".
Synanon City, Tomales Bay, California
Frank Gehry's buildings are American: individualistic, inventive, and anti-elitist to the point of barbarism. He has been called the only unabashedly unique architect:

My approach to architecture is different. I try to rid myself of the burden of culture and look for new ways to approach the work. I want to be open-ended. There are no rules, no right, or wrong. I'm often unsure as to what's ugly and what's pretty. Buildings become obsolete, so individual criteria is not the issue.

Each of Gehry's buildings is a "collage" of the locality and set of values in which it lives. A house for California painter Ron Davis takes on the character of the artist's work, achieving the illusory space Davis strives for in painting. "An irregular trapezoid slopes from 30 feet at one corner down to 10 feet at the opposite corner. Windows vary in size and shape, each variation suggesting a new line of perspective. Walls move on wheels and change position with the artist's moods."

If you move a chair, or a wall, you don't know what's going to happen to (other) relationships. Night brings on another change. Like the sea, the moods are endless.

Perhaps no building reacts as violently to context as Gehry's own home. By wrapping an ordinary mid-century Dutch style, pink-shingled house in corrugated metal and chain link, Gehry overthrows the principle of respecting context by acknowledging style. He makes a gesture of deeper respect to the actual state of a fabric
in which "hopelessly bland houses of picturesque pastiche, decorative fences, plastic boats, and aluminum automobiles. The house is an uncompromising statement on the "smugness" of suburban living. It naively adopts the suburban ideal hook, line, and sinker! The asphalt driveway penetrates the walls of the home to become the floor, or foundation, of the kitchen and dining room. Stud walls are uncovered and encased in glass, as if they were things of beauty. The "historicist memory" of the original house is glimpsed through a patina of glass and steel, just as the memory of a Dutch colonial house was encrusted with asphalt shingles and aluminum windows.

Gehry's own childhood memories are enshrined in the bright pastel cabinets and old enameled stove in the kitchen. Gehry believes a building should be claimed by its occupant. To this end, his involvement with a project ends with the shell:

I design for minimal construction and let the user define his own space, and make it an intimate part of himself...He will develop a relationship that is totally different from the person's down the hall.

The fine tuning is left to the owner's temperament and discretion. His house is his culture's and his own.

In an age of revisionism and romanticism, Frank Gehry accepts American institutions which make more academically-minded architects uncomfortable. Breathing into them the lyric spirit of architecture. In doing this, he acts as neither a visionary, nor an apologist. He designs as he sees, so any criticism his buildings generate is best directed elsewhere.
Gehry House

Davis Studio
The Shakers maintained separation of the sexes, believing that lustful gratifications of the flesh were the "source and foundation of human corruption."

The flanking stairways join at the hall. The sexes moved together into heaven by walking separate paths. Male and female symbolism is incorporated into the separate-together door.

Shakertown, South Union, Kentucky

"An emphasis on self control and direct communication with God, familiar standards in American religious movements, has often led to asceticism, particularly with such material forms as buildings"...This is true of the Women's Commonwealth, which preferred simplicity and practicality to elaborate decoration. The unpretentious style was a conscious contrast to gingerbread "feminine" finery.

This is certainly an understatement. The severe forms of the feminist Women's Commonwealth reflect an unprecedented directness, and a wealth of male-turned-female symbolism.
The Woman's Commonwealth, Belton, Texas

The former Shakertown was partially suited to the needs of the Order of Saint Benedict. This Shaker family house is expressive of the simplicity of the Shaker lifestyle and the individual's direct relationship with God. (Notice the lack of hierarchy of porch; one man, one window to the heavens.) It was readily adopted by the Benedictines for the same reasons.

Benedictine Monastery, South Union, Kentucky
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


