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Helena van Vliet, LLC | Restorative Biophilic Design

April/May, 2014

Life is Movement

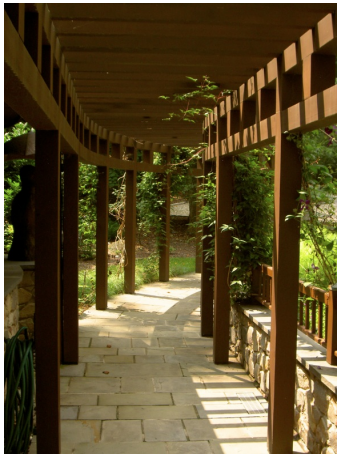
Let's say you're visiting new friends. It's the first time you meet at their place and you've been looking forward to it. You arrive on time and look about. There is no obvious entry but wait, there is the sound of water. It's enticing. You follow it. Dense foliage obscures the view. A stone wall awaits up ahead. Protective.

Then you see it: there is a path!

Proceed....through an archway of vines you glimpse a stone tower, massive because you are standing beneath it. Stronger now, the sound of water. It pulls you and accentuates the feeling of 'privacy.' How? There is the scent of flowers. Where from? The archway feels shady but just beyond there is sunlight. Proceed....you discover the door, which will announce your arrival. Before you knock though, you stand a moment to take in the view, your reward for taking your time through the meander of immersive scenes.

The architecture of this experience was never limited to the building the door eventually allowed entry to. The approach with all its nuances, its sequence of outdoor rooms was never random.

Ultimately any sense of place is experienced in processional movement.



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Meditation in Movement

We tend to think of buildings and spaces as solid enclosed entities. When we think of them as more fluid experiences, however, we see that human-made environments can be so much more: connecting, engaging, invigorating, calming ...imbued with feelings capable of embedding emotional experiences into our memories.

The entryway, for example, rather than merely a door, is the realm of "hallos" and "good-byes"...the realm of an embrace, brief or lingering, of a kiss....it can watch over a tearful parting or an anxiously awaited arrival. The doorway is another place, where memories are made. What we experience on our way to this door influences how we arrive.



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The Opposite of Instant Gratification

Experience in movement assumes a component of time. Time is a necessary aspect in building memorable experience. Places to be discovered where views must be found and new encounters reveal themselves gradually. Gradual takes time. Exploration should lead to surprise and delight. Had a visitor, for example, parked their car to walk directly into the front door, no memorable experience would have occurred. Memorably experiences, however, are invaluable for keeping us in touch with our emotional selves.

Unhurried encounters. Immersive investigation. Multi-sensory environments. Spaces with those qualities invigorate, delight and connect us to place and thereby to our own sense of belonging and being well.



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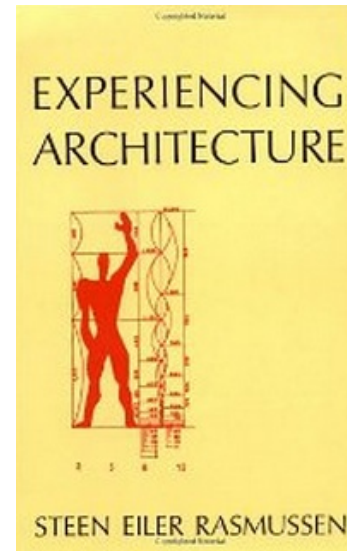
Recommended Reading

Experiencing Architecture

By Steen Eiler Rasmussen

From The Book:

Profusely illustrated with fine instances of architectural experimentation through the centuries, *Experiencing Architecture* manages to convey the intellectual excitement of superb design. From teacups, riding boots, golf balls, and underwater sculpture to the villas of Palladio and the fish-feeding pavilion of the Peking Winter Palace, the author ranges over the less-familiar byways of designing excellence.



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