

TOWARDS A PHENOMENA-ORIENTED ARCHITECTURE

by

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Neal Stuart Baggett

May 2010

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family and friends. Especially want to think my Dad for his support, patience and presence and to my Mom for your influence and encouragement to stay true to my process. Thanks to my wife Ann for standing tirelessly with me through this journey. I would also like to think my thesis advisors Chris, Zuzanna, and John for your guidance and patience.

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ABSTRACT

Architecture's focus on the visual faculty omits potential dialogue with the tactile, auditory and proprioceptive ones. We have become a culture encouraged to live in that visual sense. The question is if Architecture can begin to engage the body and the sense for the user to have a more robust and fulfilling experience. This thesis rekindles dialogue with all sense perceptions with an architecture that engages the varying aspects of the built environment: texture, relationship and scale.

INTRODUCTION

The defining moment is always the present. When we take the time to become present we look around, we see our surroundings anew, and we acknowledge the finitude of the moment. This view, although apparently simple, is fundamentally at odds with the omniscient view that has been proposed and abided by throughout the course of Western philosophy. That view intends to re-make the world in its likeness and proposes an architecture that is eternal, because it is, ostensibly, based on the ultimate truth or reality. The new view, which can be called a phenomenological-approach to being—also referred to as *Being*, with reference to Martin Heidegger—admits a tentative understanding of the world, one that is constantly shifting what it apprehends based on what is revealed at the moment. This is fundamentally opposed to the Western idea of ultimate knowledge, if such knowledge did exist, it would be justified in dominating the landscape because it would have the final word on what is beautiful, good and true. I propose that such a view is mistaken, and that self-knowledge and knowledge of the world is only ever of this present moment and only ever partially disclosed to witnessing humans; and that, despite this always incomplete nature, the deep, felt sense of the body can make *the world meaningful*.

What would it mean to move towards such a vision of being and knowing, not to mention self-knowing, in architecture? A phenomena-oriented approach to architecture must reveal this partially disclosed, tentative, shifting, temporal nature of life and existence. It may do so by using place to reveal that being *is* time; for example, having the natural light change the internal atmosphere of the structure on an hourly and daily basis in a way that is physically palpable within. The light, changing from an oculus that illuminates the variations in texture, depth, and open space throughout the day, creates a felt sense of time—a striking effect. The humans witnessing these shifts are reminded on a bodily level of the temporality and the finitude of Being. *So this phenomena-oriented approach to architecture is an attempt to create a situation*

where the witnessing human feels, and is open to the world, which is revealed by and through engagement.

If we take the phenomenological-approach to being and employ it to study a phenomena-oriented approach to architecture, what is immediately necessary to consider? First, just as there must be a place for architecture to emerge from, so the human body must serve as the ground of being. The body is primary to the experience of being human. Without the body human experience is no longer *of* the world; it is no longer connected to it in any real way. Without the body the consciousness of human beings no longer opens onto the world, but becomes mired in mental concepts and judgments. A false sense of separation from the world will result, producing a sense of disconnection with oneself and the world. The bodily sense-organs and the felt sense of the body in gravity, also known as proprioception, are always present and are pre-conscious. By pre-conscious I mean that they exist prior to thinking, and most likely are related to the motor-cortex rather than the limbic system or neo-cortex. What Juhani Pallasmaa refers to as “the silent and irreducible presence of the body” is the part of us that, being pre-conscious and sensory is always open to the world. *I want to find a way for architecture to enhance this bodily part of ourselves and the openness that it establishes.* This encouragement of embodiment is an important step in escaping the disembodied-mind feeling that has accompanied us from the beginning of Western thought.

Second, it needs to be said that a phenomena-oriented approach to architecture will act as a metaphor for the embodied, phenomenological-approach to being. In other words, the experience of the body as the ground of being will be mirrored by an architecture, which has the effect of silently holding the place. I refer to this illuminated holding of place as *chōra*. In this way, architecture re-enforces the sense of embodiment, both as a metaphor and through direct attempts to speak to the senses. This approach involves the illumination of physical surroundings in this present moment, because the present moment is, and always has been, the only place we know ourselves and know what it is to be human. As Juhani Pallasmaa explains, “Artistic works

originate in the body of the maker and they return back to the human body as they are being experienced.”¹ So the body is the locus of artistic exchange, and *chōra* is the locus of spatiality, place and placing in the metaphoric realm of art itself.

DISEMBODIMENT AND DISEMBODIED VISION

“An architectural work is not experienced as a collection of isolated visual pictures, but in its fully embodied material and spiritual presence.”²

In the beginning of Western philosophy, Plato put forth the theory of Forms, maintaining that the essential nature of things existed and could be divined by philosophers. The philosopher searches for knowledge of the changeless, essential forms that define the phenomenal world. Plato also elaborated the Pythagorean doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which presupposed “the dualist idea that soul and body are intrinsically distinct substances, which coexist during our life, but separate again at death.”³ So from the outset the division of subject and object was taken to the deepest part of our understanding of human existence. In the first half of the 17th-century, René Descartes formalized this split by seeing the body as a machine and the mind as operating completely outside of physical reality. “The mind is a substance whose essence is thought alone, and hence exists entirely outside geometric categories, including *place*.”⁴ [Italics mine.] Like a machine, both the body and the physical world, would be best understood according to the principles of causality and in the language of mathematics. In Descartes’ view, the senses are separate from each other and they passively receive data via the mind. “Body is a substance

¹ Pallasmaa, J. *Encounters: Architectural Essays*. Helsinki: Rakennustieto Oy (2005), p. 345.

² Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin*. London: Wiley-Academy (2005).

³ Craig, Edward. *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Routledge (2000), p. 678.

⁴ Ibid., p. 204.

whose essence is extension alone, a geometric object without even sensory qualities like colour or taste, which exist only in the perceiving mind.”⁵

It is precisely these splits, and particularly that of mind and body, which have resulted in an exaggerated estimation of the visual in art and architecture. When the disembodied mind, the Cartesian self, enters a space the head cranes forward from the neck and the eyes begin to scan for information. This is what I envision as the posture of disembodiment. Seeing — thinking — judging. It is the Cartesian self wanting to divorce the body, a hindrance, and to appropriate the environment visually. This appropriation process speaks to the presumed division of subject and object and it undermines the values of a phenomenological-approach to being: where the body is the locus of experience.

The suppression of the felt sense of the body in gravity has led to the posture of disembodiment described above, but also to a way of seeing that regards the world as a series of visual events, rather than through the spacious experience of bodily perception. While the visual emphasis feels disjointed and cognitive, the spacious body is illuminated from within, enjoying its pre-conscious connectedness. The privileging of sight has resulted in a loss of the “complexity, comprehensiveness and plasticity of perception.”⁶ After all, are places not remembered as we experienced them in our bodies?

The body memory of place at a particular moment may be felt as the tonality of enveloping light; the richness of the textures and contexts of objects; the penumbras, perspectives and horizons of the visual field. The memory may include the feeling and appearance of sunlight through the thin flesh of the eyelids while the face is turned to the sky, eyes closed. In summation, embodiment has the inner light of the body in gravity simply experiencing at a particular moment in time. And architecture has the potential to strengthen this experience, or to diminish it.

⁵ Ibid, p. 204.

⁶ Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin*. London: Wiley-Academy (2005), p. 39.

ARCHITECTURE OF A SURVEILLANCE CULTURE: DISEMBODIED SPACE

“The inhumanity of contemporary architecture and cities can be understood as the consequence of the negligence of the body and the senses, and an imbalance in our sensory system.”⁷

One unfortunate conclusion of a visual-dominance culture is the advent of architecture that it is alienating rather than sheltering. This is particularly notable in public space. The excuse in creating plazas and store-fronts which lack interiority or depth comes from a belief that the quality or the “realness” of the building material itself will make up for the shallowness of design. The philosophical logic is easy to trace here: first, everything is made up of atoms, which are self-sufficient entities—the “building blocks” of the universe; and by extension, the quality of materials used is what is believed to lend its identity, its “realness” to the built spaces. It is as if the atoms speak for themselves in their (proposed) immutability. So the material used in building is believed to speak for itself, to tell a story of its history, to lend its meaning. This explains the current fetish with “real” or “natural” material.⁸ (Even recycled material that clads buildings has to be obviously recycled, or at least give the impression that it is, even if it is not.) This belief in the identity of material—its newness, its uniformity, its purity—is presumed to be sufficient to create meaningful buildings.

This is particularly evident in the façaded box stores of Bozeman, MT that comply to design ordinances, which increase feelings of alienation and exposure, rather than having a humanizing effect on their environments. (It would be more humanizing to allow them to be more self-disclosing and less servile to bourgeois ambition, i.e., allow them to be ‘ugly’.)

Imagine a human moving across the field of vision, displayed starkly as if on a stage against an eternal backdrop. For Martin Heidegger

⁷ Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin*. London: Wiley-Academy (2005), p. 19-20.

⁸ Kennedy, Sheila. *KVA: Material Misuse*. London: Zanders (2001).

modern humans had been reduced to “a planetary desert called nihilism”⁹ where they could be imagined creeping amid the fallen idols of eternity. He wrote, “We are too late for the gods and too early for Being.”¹⁰ In Heidegger’s mind it was our forgetting the truth about *Being*—that our being-in-the-world never reveals a full picture of itself—that had led us to the futility and absurdity of nihilism. The planetary desert of buildings that are the same wherever they are found across America, particularly those with the direct pretension to meaning, such as chain bookstores, may give us pause to reflect on how architecture creates nihilistic situations.

We must ask how we feel in our bodies as we walk across a parking lot from an oasis of supplanted national chain stores to our vehicle. We know this to be disembodied space, because in it the sense of place has been obscured beyond recognition. Atomistically speaking, we have been led to believe that the meaning (or quality, or life) is in the material, or it’s in the idea, or the gesture, or something intangible; yet somehow it feels meaningless. And in fact in our bodies, we know it to be without the essential context of life that shelters us from the fear of a complete lack of meaning.

EMBODIMENT AND CHŌRA

The embodied self, whose engagement with art is visceral, sensuous and earthly, uses the peripheral vision of the eyes, which softens the focus and allows the other sense modalities to engage. This is what I refer to as an embodied engagement with art. This engagement comes from the wisdom that nothing is known without a knower. So, a phenomena-oriented approach to architecture is an attempt to create a situation where the witnessing human feels, and is open to the world, which is revealed by and through engagement. It is impossible to experience the body in this way without being *present*, and by

⁹ Craig, Edward. *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Routledge (2000), p. 340.

¹⁰ Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin*. London: Wiley-Academy (2005).

present I mean that capacity to let the body feel whole and sound without trying to embody external content in any way. This can also be referred to as an attitude of allowing, in which we attend to our experience non-judgmentally and without compulsive thinking, until a sense of what is at hand emerges from the body itself or from the spirit of the place.¹¹

In Built upon Love, Alberto Perez-Gomez argues for a deep connection between ethical and poetic values. He writes, “Ethical action is always singular and circumstantial—a miraculous experience similar to our encounters with beauty in works of art.”¹² In other words, the provenance of the desire, the movement toward, that constitutes either a good action or an action that recognizes beauty is absolutely, seamlessly of the moment in which it was conceived. When it is authentically ethical the action is seamless with the desire that impelled it and so happens instantaneously, without analysis. This definition is echoed later in a citation of M. Le Blond, distinguishing between the rules of taste and those of true genius in art: “Taste is often distinct from genius. Genius is a pure gift of nature.” Genius is instantaneous, whereas taste is studied. Out of the moment of presence both ethical and artistic impulses arise. In this moment, clarity of vision and action become one.

This basis is further elaborated in Gomez’s definition of *chōra*, a concept derived from the dance platforms of the springtime rituals of Dionysus and from the work of the pre-Socratics. (According to Heidegger, the pre-Socratics understood that *Being* was primary and experiential, rather than thinking.) In ancient Greece, *chōra* was literally a platform for ritual catharsis and renewal to “produce wonder and provide existential safety for the community.”¹³ For Gomez, *chōra* is an idea of space that is sacred and ceremonial, providing a ground for *Being*. It is a space where meaning occurs, but does not itself dictate the content of meaning. In other words, *chōra* is an opportunity to be present in the body, before any thoughts or labels occur in the mind. This moment is

¹¹ Gendlin, Eugene. *Focusing*. New York: Bantam (1978).

¹² Perez-Gomez, A. Built Upon Love, p. 4.

¹³ Ibid., p. 7.

sacred, clarifying and peaceful. It harkens again to the moment of inspiration, in which clarity of vision and action are one.

Architecture provides shelter, not only literally but also metaphorically (as has been discussed above with regard to the importance of meaning versus nihilism) and it provides both a literal and a metaphorical structure. The clarity of the physical structure nestles us protectively, allowing us to think clearly and dream without the fear of chaos. *Chōra* refers to a place that *holds* human experience. We hold the experience with an openness by remaining present in our physical bodies and this is reflected architecturally in *chōra*, which holds us with an open hand. By an “open hand” I mean that the meaning of *chōra* is neither pre-ordained nor is it set-in-stone. It is simply a place for what happens, and as such it is always ecstatically open to Heidegger’s *Being*.

ARCHITECTURE OF SHELTERED POSSIBILITY: REMEMBERING BEING

“A walk through the forest is invigorating and healing due to the constant interaction of all sense modalities.”¹⁴

In childhood, intuition is a means of creativity and motivation, unhindered by abstraction and rationalization. When I was nine, I would spend hours playing in the white pine forests of my neighborhood in North Carolina. In this environment, possibility emerged as I began playing: using tree limbs and pine straw as my material and the forest as my palate. Then the “how” of defining space was a question of intuitive gratification. I was building a shelter, there were practical considerations naturally, but the “how” simply unfolded. I do not attribute this to a child’s simplicity or even lack of self-consciousness, but rather to an ability that children may come by more easily than adults: to allow the place to define itself. The “how” of building was to be intuited and followed: a

¹⁴ Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin*. London: Wiley-Academy (2005), p. 41.

series of defined walkways (branches) from tree to tree connected huts (platforms clutched near the trunks). We were allowing what was already present to open.

In the summer of 1998, I traveled home to North Carolina. By chance, I met another rock-climber a few hours after arriving. We became friends. A few weeks later, he shared a new climbing area with me, yet to be discovered by the local climbing community. We set to work clearing the area. The rock face of Grandmother Mountain, as she was called, overtook me. My friend and I had no other pressing concerns and were free to devote ourselves to the work which emerged. Over the next 90 days, I walked, explored, created, and built, as if there were nothing else to live for. There was no money involved, and we often put in 15-hour days. We spent those hours designing trail systems that followed the contours of Grandmother's terrain. When we came to areas too steep or wet, we would search for large granite rocks to build staircases and paths that would mitigate erosion and scarring. It was true and unforgettable play. I would walk up to a boulder in the forest, clean the moss and dirt from its face, and then examine what was there. The rock would explain how to scale it, and I listened. I stayed in the thrall of play, and those months are burned into my memory as a result.

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL-APPROACH TO BEING

“A great musician plays himself rather than the instrument, and a skillful soccer player plays the entity of himself, the other players and the internalized and embodied field, instead of merely kicking the ball. The player understands where the goal is in a way which is lived rather than known.”¹⁵

Flow is a state of total focus that is achieved when a person is engrossed in an activity which meets their skill level closely enough to provide challenge, but without exceeding their present ability. Flow is the focused alertness that emerges from a state of deep engagement with what is happening. This phenomenon has been most obvious in my lifetime when watching great athletes such as Michael Jordan or Tiger Woods command a focus and intensity that allows them to rise above their previous best. I have experienced the rapture of flow in my adult life at times through sports and more recently in imagining and designing architectural space. It is in the state of flow that I have found my happiest moments are spent. Flow is, interestingly, characterized by a forgetting of the self and an abandonment of thinking.¹⁶ My favorite example of this is snowboarding through a group of tight trees, which seem to become invisible as the path through them reveals itself. Naturally, these are minutes—which seem like eternities—when the self and its worries are forgotten.

The flow state would renew me for days and weeks. There could be no doubt of meaninglessness in the world. The heightened state of awareness allowed me to feel spacious and connected—my body resonating with the felt world. Due to the precision required by these activities I had to know pre-reflexively and act without thought. The thinking mind simply fell silent. I felt a deep connection to my surroundings, which no longer felt separate from the spacious experience of my own body. The understanding that remains from these experiences of flow is the ground for meaning, it is Heidegger’s Being. It is a place of freedom, creativity and infinite possibility.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁶ Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper-Collins (1990).

CONCLUSION

In actuality, our perception is a much more engaging experience than only a visual and cognitive one. It involves emotions and the felt sense of the body in gravity, as well as the effect of these on experience and memory, and the intertwining of memory with place. Most of us have known this through *play*, whether in physical activity or the arts. The bottom line is that without allowing the body and the emotions to *be* there is no true engagement with place. The overt focus on the visual and on thinking, undergirded by a tacit metaphysics of atomism has led to an architectural nihilism (that cannot be explained by economic forces alone). So the engagement of witnessing humans with architecture requires becoming present to this very moment, which can only be accomplished by allowing the body to feel whole and sound, acknowledging that this may mean putting troubles temporarily aside. This *allowing* is a radically different understanding of the world, where we find meaning in connection (through the body to the place) rather than in mental survey and appropriation. Allowing involves waiting, listening, and moments of uncertainty, and the reward is the revealing of *Being*, which is inclusive and gives us a sense of peace, wholeness, and possibility.

Art and architecture have the potential to re-awaken our sense of wonder, our sense of discovering the world in which we live.¹⁷ In order to do this, Maurice Merleau-Ponty argued that the emphasis on scientific observation penetrating down to the true nature of things, and on its capacity to reduce things down to their most essential nature, needed to be abandoned, for a more pliant, perceptive approach. It may be thought of as the difference between staring something down and gazing at it. There is a world of assumption behind the act of staring: presumption of authority, sole subjectivity, logic, access to truth, etc. Gazing, by comparison, is an act of openness and inclusion. It is responsive and

¹⁷ Baldwin, Thomas. *The World of Perception by Maurice Merleau-Ponty*. London: Routledge (2004).

capable of being surprised. There is a sense of shared engagement between self and world, or as Merleau-Ponty put it, “our embodiment is integral to the role of a priori concepts in sense experience.”¹⁸ Moreover, the body provides the literal and figurative ground of experience. It is that to which we always return, we only failed to notice it because it is so obvious: it exists beneath the division of subject and object as a kind of sub-stratum of awareness. When we regain the body, or *chōra* in architecture, or the appreciation of the perceived, sensuous world over the symbolic one in art, we return to meaning in a way that cannot be assailed by technological reductionism, or the much talked about nihilism of the modern-age. In short, we cannot have finality, but we can have temporality with the body as the deep ground of existence to which we have always already been relating.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

CASE STUDIES

The case studies will be based on the artist's design methodology and their connection to my analysis of a phenomenological-oriented approach to being and a phenomena-oriented approach to art. Specifically, I will examine how the movement and proprioception of the body in relation to art/ architecture awakens the spirit of the place, its *chōra*.

Alvar Aalto

“In every case one must achieve a simultaneous solution of opposites... Nearly every design task involves tens, often hundreds, sometimes thousands of different contradictory elements, which are forced into a functional harmony only by man's will. This harmony cannot be achieved by any other means than those of art.”

— Alvar Aalto

Alvar Aalto has been called the father of modernism by architects and scholars. As any individual on the forefront of a movement in human thought, Aalto's work cannot be reduced to a type or definition, rather his work is a source of artistic inspiration. Aalto's work gives a solidity and character to things, that is to say, the details of his architectural performance invoke the wonder of the presence of the object. Aalto seems to treat both the collective of his work and the individual pieces with a reverence for their status of *object as object*, and this gives them a noble, eternal quality that defines modernism. It is in part the eschewing of symbolic realms, the refusal to call in leitmotifs of another age that allows the beautiful feeling of presence in to emerge in us.

As an illustration of *object as object* I call to mind William Carlos Williams' poem:

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.¹⁹

Although we remember the strict minimalism of van de Rohe in relation to modernism, Aalto's work is more about *the things themselves* and not a stylistic reduction of their character to *pure form*. In the ever present conversation between rationality and feeling, Aalto referred to his work as "super-rationalist" by which he meant that he incorporated "psychological, intuitive, and subconscious factors within the design equation." Importantly, Aalto's work is about human scale. This is evident in every architectural gesture—there is an embracing quality such that a person feels at home in every possible angle of his architecture. It is as if the whole were built about each particular spot and this cannot help but elicit the present moment. His design has a clarity and functional efficiency that is astounding, yet it never overshadows his gentleness, his affection for humans, for their lives and occupations, shines through in the details and in the overarching sense of place, dwelling, inhabitation. Let us examine varying elements in Säynätsalo Town Hall.

"When I personally have some architectural problem to solve, I am constantly . . . faced with an obstacle difficult to surmount, a kind of "three in the morning feeling." The reason seems to be the complicated, heavy burden represented by the fact that architectural planning operates with innumerable elements which often conflict. Social, human,

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economic and technical demands combined with psychological questions affecting both the individual and the group, together with movements of human masses and individuals, and internal frictions of all these form a complex tangle which cannot be unraveled in a rational or mechanical way. The immense number of different demands and component problems constitute a barrier from behind which it is difficult for the basic idea to emerge . . . I forget the entire mass of problems for a while, after the atmosphere of the job and the innumerable difficult requirements have sunk into my subconscious. Then I move on to a method of working which is very much like abstract art. I just draw by instinct, not architectural synthesis, but what are sometimes childlike compositions, and in this way, on this abstract basis, the main idea gradually takes shape, a kind of universal substance which helps me to bring innumerable contradictory component problems into harmony."²⁰

— Alvar Aalto

Mount Angel Library Reading-room

Use of natural light and the spherical movement of the space, creates a feeling of presence, studious intent, warmth, depth, universality. The sense of human scale is present and invites occupation, giving library visitors a sense of their appropriateness in the environment

Viipuri City Library Auditorium

The ceiling was created with the functional intention of acoustic enhancement, but the visual and sensuous aspects are a gift. Light seems to flow across the undulating surface. Sound bounces for optimal quality, and texturally there is lightness, refinement, and a restraint that is decidedly Finnish.

Villa Mairea Detail

²⁰ Quantril, Malcolm. Alvar Aalto: A Critical Study. New York: Shocken Books, 1983. p5

Each door handle was designed individually, causing a moment of pause and reflection upon use. It is a bodily experience to create a moment that allows us to re-enter ourselves and experience what is.

Säynätsalo Town Hall Trusses

The council chamber trusses have the quality of fingers delicately holding the ceiling. There is a sense of delicacy without referring at all to traditional images of ornamentation and refinement; visibility of craft is mediated by idiosyncratic detail so that it never becomes a mere exercise of functionality.

Steven Holl

Steven Holl is an internationally-recognized American architect who, in my eyes, has continued the thoughtful embodied work of Alvar Aalto and claimed his own architectural identity in the process. Holl's initial work focused primarily on typology, and recently shifted toward a more phenomenological approach to design and architecture. His concern is, more specifically, for bodily engagement with surroundings.

“Seven bottles of light in a stone box; the metaphor of light is shaped in different volumes emerging from the roof whose irregularities aim at different qualities of light: East facing, South facing, West and North facing, all gathered together for one united ceremony. Each of the light volumes corresponds to a part of the program of Jesuit Catholic worship. The south-facing light corresponds to the procession, a fundamental part of the mass. The city-facing north light corresponds to the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament and to the mission of outreach to the community. The main worship space has a volume of east and west light. At night, which is the particular time of gatherings for mass in this

university chapel, the light volumes are like beacons shining in all directions out across the campus.”²¹

St. Ignatius Chapel

Experiencing the Chapel is nothing like looking at images of it. This speaks to the realities of embodiment and experience. As a visual image the chapel is interesting and at the same time unimpressive, but in totality it is magical. In 2006, I touched the water as it moved across the floor. I felt the light and shadows as they highlighted the walls and openings. The textures on the ceiling and walls gave the space a sense of depth, realness, and texture. Like Aalto’s work, the design came from within, from the experience of the witnessing human who was invited into the deepest recesses of its mystery.

Through Holl’s methodology of designing through play (using watercolors) and intuition he is able to create an experience that touches us both physically and spiritually. Technically speaking the chapel begins to address the physical nature of the body through the sense of touch as you grab the door handle and the visual as peer through the oval shaped windows on it. Holl embraces consciousness or the spirit through the play of light, color, shadow and reflection. The building seems to radiate consciousness toward the city of Seattle with it multicolored light.

Olafur Eliasson

Olafur Eliasson is an artist of Danish-Icelandic heritage. His work explores the relationship between people and their surroundings. This relationship can be seen in his 2003 Weather Project at the Tate Modern Museum, which plays with ‘atmosphericity’ or the total experience of environment or through the collaboration on the Serpentine Pavilion. His work prompt the

²¹ www.stevenholl.com/project-detail

spectator be fully engaged and offers a potential to see the world a new. Many of Eliasson's works transcend the limited experience of sight: "A blast of air, the warmth of a room, or the smell of arctic moss...can provoke an encounter that is emotional as well as visual."²²

Serpentine Pavilion

Olafur Eliasson's interest in spatial questions and ideas, explored in his artistic works, has lead him to more architectural works such as the Serpentine Pavilion. The Serpentine Gallery Pavilion was designed in 2007 by Eliasson and Norwegian architect Kjetil Thorsen. The pavilion looks similar to a children's spinning top. There is a spiral ramp that allows visitors the experience of procession from ground level to a view of the Kensington Gardens and down through an opening onto the pavilion itself. "The way in which we have organized the spiraling form is less about the form for its own sake, and more about how people move within the space." The entire project was thought out in a way to explore human experience and allow for variation within a space.

Tara Donovan

Untitled (Styrofoam cups)

"My investigations with materials address a specific trait that is unique to each material... In a sense, I develop a dialogue with each material that dictates the forms that develop. With every new material comes a specific repetitive action that builds the work, thus I feel safe in saying I will be able to keep finding new methods of production."²³

—Tara Donovan

²²

²³ Stender, Oriane. Material Seduction. Interview www.artnet.com. 2006

Tara Donovan's art is phenomenological in the sense that her "site responsive" sculptures point toward her connection to material and place. She uses a "repetitive action" and through her attention to process allows us to witness the phenomenal anew. Through this almost obsessive action Donovan builds a inherent sense of connection and consciousness between the intimacy of herself, the material, and the observer. The Styrofoam cups project bring us to an almost spiritual place while experiencing there beauty through form and light. Then as the spectator notices the material there could be a connection back toward the real or the body. The intimacy with material reminds me of Tadao Ando's expert use of concrete. These two projects are examples of Tara using simplicity and intuition in process.

Rachel Whiteread

"We cannot easily perceive or understand the reversal of space into mass, emptiness into weight, transparency into opacity, or vice versa. The oppositions of solid and void, cast form and its mould are so fundamental that we experience severe mental difficulties and anxieties when trying to relate these inverted images."

—Juhani Pallasmaa

Rachel Whiteread's work connects us to the place of both body and consciousness through the physicality of her sculptures and reorienting spectators perceptions of space. The works of Rachel Whiteread are important to the notion of taking something that can be an embodied experience such as space and turning it into a visual experience. This contradiction as Pallasmaa stated it can cause anxieties and through those anxieties questions emerge that encourage us to become present and engaged with our senses.

PROJECT

Toward a Phenomena-Oriented Architecture

“The landscape thinks itself in me, and I am its consciousness”

—Paul Cezanne

The project will invoke *play*, or the intuitive gratification of allowing the place to speak, thus entering into a dialogue. A sense of physical connectedness to place and embodiment will be the beacon that guides artistic decisions. It is through this *play* that the discovery of specific phenomena that relate to the physicality of the body and the inner consciousness of the spirit can and will emerge. Thus, the site and the campus proper will be understood through conscious play and exploration. I will try to see campus through the eyes of a fully embodied human using the senses and intuition to know and understand what is already present, and then consider my contribution. This harkens back to my childhood fort-building: I played, participated and then allowed what is to unfold. There will be a series of installations that will define what *this* place is and how we might experience it through body and spirit; in other words, what it says and how it desires to be. It will give me a chance to notice in a different way with a more connected and present understanding. My connection will be to the present: knowing what it is now and not what it was or what it may become. The goal is highlighting, focusing, pointing toward presence.

Through these installations and explorations the design of the interactive-experience center will find its beginnings. The center is a place where all people on campus are invited to share, perform and exchange thoughts, emotions, ideas, and works. It will take the focus away from the performer and the separation between the observer and the observed. It will highlight the dynamic capacity of architecture to bring us closer to one another through knowing ourselves through the sensory and the bodily aspects of being. The pavilion will provide a place where students can explore, create, and discover

themselves—because I believe these should be the defining experiences of student life.

SITE

Bozeman, Montana

Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana is one of Montana's public universities. It is the main campus in the Montana State University system and it offers excellent studies in the Arts and Sciences. MSU offers baccalaureate degrees in 51 fields, master's degrees in 41 fields, and doctoral degrees in 18 fields through its nine colleges. Over 12,420 students attend MSU, and the university faculty numbers approximately 700 full-time and 420 part-time. The campus is located on the south side of Bozeman, and it sprawls 1,170 acres, making it the largest in the state and, with an elevation of over 4,900 feet, it is one of the highest as well. It also has 360 degree views of local mountain ranges, such as the Bridger's to the north. Montana State University is located in the Gallatin valley.

The site is the campus of Montana State University. I chose the site in order to give me knowledge of place through play and presence, rather than maps and site photography. In smelling, touching, interacting, and discovering the place, I aim to highlight its presence, to allow us to re-engage with the place. The campus has a disconnected quality. The business of the students treading their paths across it has given it an ignored feeling—as if it were merely a place to “get through.” I hope that my exploration of place can reveal how this place affects the thousands of people who walk, bike, and stroll through it daily. This will show, I believe that the campus is a great deal more a part of our lives while we are students that we realize. Years from now, when we remember our time here, we will remember our bodily inhabitation as we studied, discussed, and listened. But can we feel our bodily engagement here, now? The buildings are used, but are they felt? Are they allowed to contribute to our

spatial experience, or are they ignored? The trees shade and dance along the walkways, but are there any people who find themselves momentarily moved by this? How could experiences of being moved be engaged? These moments of reflective pause that allow us to know ourselves, experiencing our bodies and the place, are the ones that I am after.

The specific site for my project is near the intersection of the East-West walkway and South walkway, which provide circulation for some of the major buildings on campus. The specific site is directly North of Renne Library and East of Montana Hall. The site dimensions are 105' E/W and 200' N/S. I chose this place because it is one where students cut through to go to class, get food, find a place to study, or return home. There are two strong diagonals that cut from corner to corner allowing students to get to other buildings with the least distance traveled. It is an open space that seems to be ignored and used primarily for convenience. How might such a space be reawakened to its travelers? Also, the site is adorned with several mounds that offer an interesting topographic quality the seem to be of interest to me on first investigation. Finally, the site was chosen to create an experience that is in the center of campus, near the usual areas of gathering.

Observation and Interaction Space

Site 21,000 square feet

Observation space/Gathering space 2,000 square feet

Gallery space 3,000 square feet

Presentation space 1,500 square feet

Performance space 3,500 square feet

Coffee/tea/self serve soup and salad food space(CO-OP) 2,500 square feet

Offices 1,500 square feet

Disability resources

Clubs and student resource offices

Study/ Reflective Space 2,500 square feet

Restrooms 1,000 square feet

3 remote gestures that connect to the pavillian symbolically and metaphorically

Tea rooms

Small performance space

These spaces will incorporate student work, meetings, meditations, and performances. The space will affect accepted perspectives of subject and object so that the experience will point toward a more bodily and human experience.

Circulation 30%

The circulation space will be a significant piece of the site plan, since the area was originally a place of movement and passage. The circulation corridor will merge with the other spaces and this sharing of square footage will encourage interaction and engagement. The pavilion will hold the vision of a phenomena-oriented architecture.

Offices 1,500 square feet

Study/ Reflective Space 2,500 square feet

Restrooms 1,000 square feet

Site zoning and code requirements

Zoning is Public Lands/Institutions (PLI)

Code Analysis 2000 International Building Code

Section 303

303. 1 Assembly Group A. Assembly Group A occupancy includes, among others, the use of a building or structure, or a portion thereof, for the gathering together of persons for purposes such as civic, social, or religious factions, recreation, food or drink consumption or awaiting transportation. A room or space used for assembly purposes by fewer than 50 persons and accessory to another occupancy shall be included as part of that occupancy.

A-3 Assembly uses intended for worship, recreation or amusement.

Table 503

Construction: Type I A, Unlimited height, unlimited floor area

Section 602.2

Types I and II. Types I and II construction are those types in which the building elements listed below are of non combustible materials.

Table 601

Structural Frame: 3 hour

Bearing Walls: 3 hour

Non Bearing Walls/Partitions: 1 hour

Floor Construction: 2 hour

Roof Construction: 1.5 hour

Section 903.2.1.3

An automatic fire sprinkler system shall be provided throughout a fire area containing a group A-3 occupancy where the area is greater than 12,000 square feet and the occupant load greater than 300.

Table 1003.2.2.2

Maximum allowable floor area per occupant:

Assembly without fixed seats: 15 square feet

Table 1004.2.1

Maximum occupant load for spaces with one means of egress: 50

Table 1004.2.4

Maximum exit access travel distance for A occupancies: 250 feet

Table 1004.3.2.1

Corridor fire resistance rating for sprinkled A occupancy: 0 hour

Table 1005.2.1

Number of exits for served occupant loads: 1-500 : 2 exits

501-1,000 : 3 exits

Over 1,000 : 4 exits

Section 1008 Assembly

1008.1 Group A occupancies that have an occupant load of greater than 300 shall be provided with a main exit. The main exit shall be of sufficient width to accommodate not less than one half of the occupant load, but such width shall not that the total required width of all means of egress leading to an exit. Where the building is classified as a group A occupancy, the main exit shall front on at least one street or an unoccupied space of not less than 10 feet in width that adjoins a street or public way.

1008.2 In addition to having access to a main exit, each level of an occupancy in group A having an occupant load of greater than 300 shall be provided with additional exits that shall provide an egress capacity for at least one half of the total occupant load served by that level.

1008.4 For balconies or galleries having a seating capacity of over 50 located in group A occupancies, at least two means of egress shall be provided, one from each side of every balcony or gallery, with at least one leading directly to an exit.

Table 1107.2.2.1

Minimum required number of wheelchair space clusters for assembly areas up to 300: 1

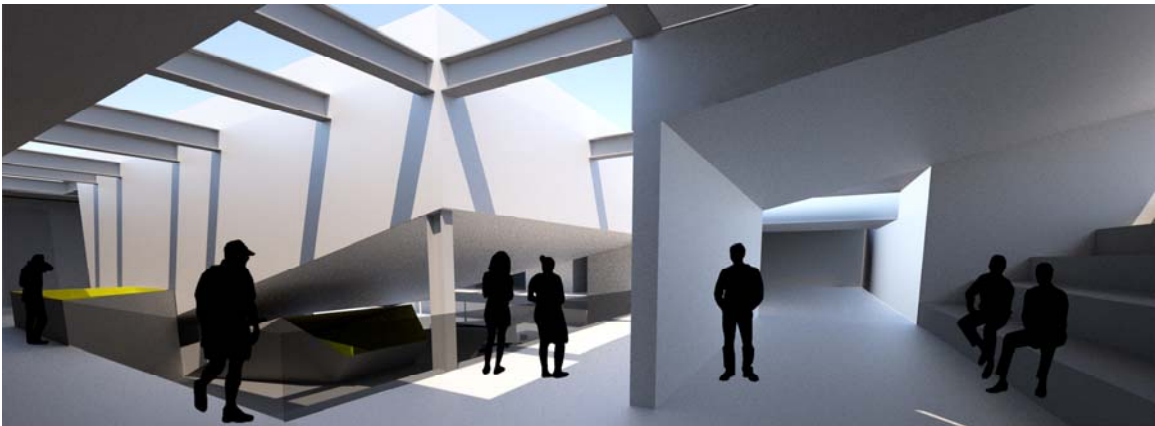


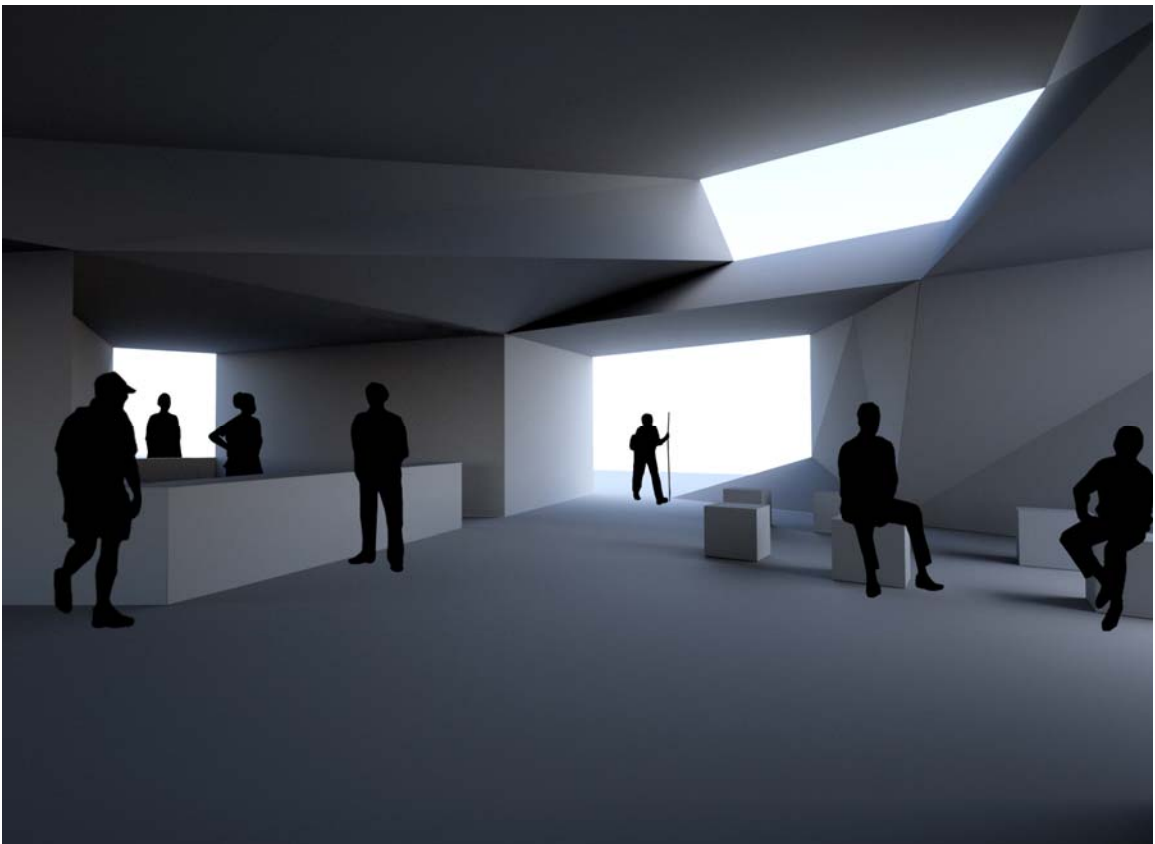
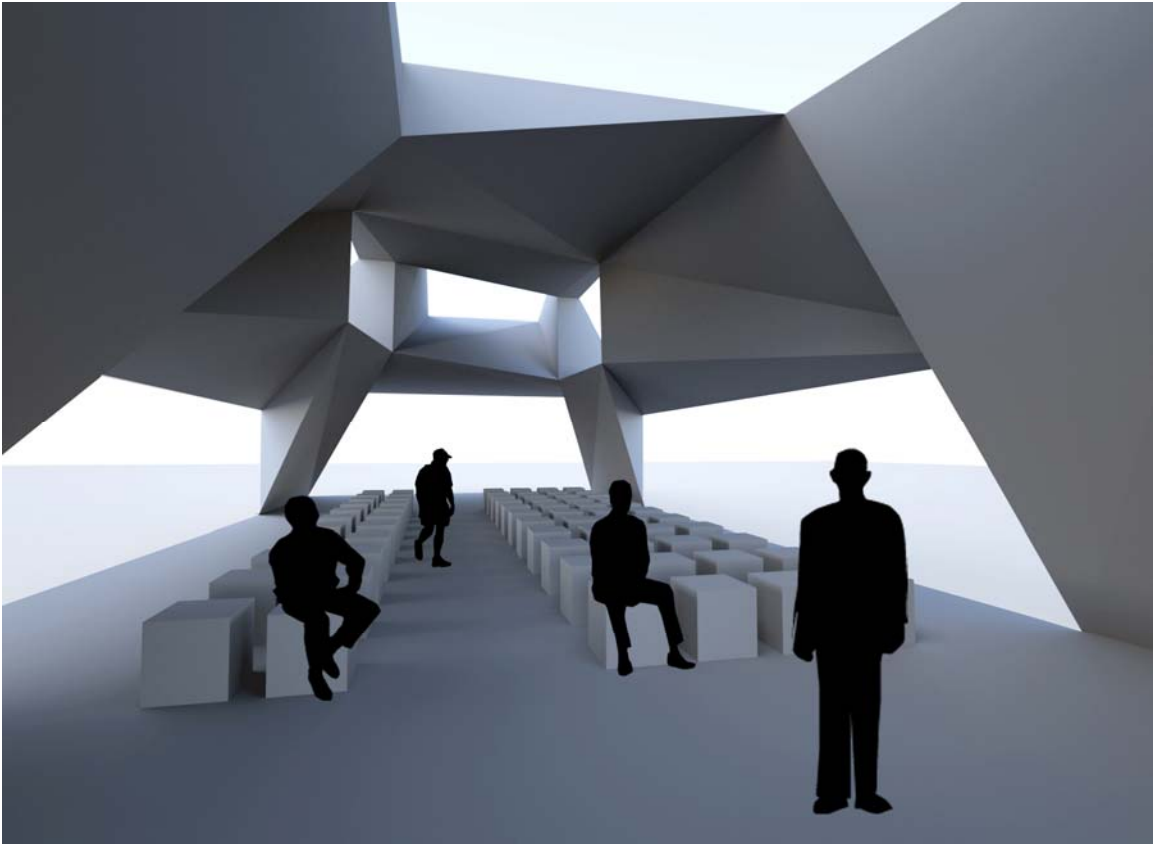


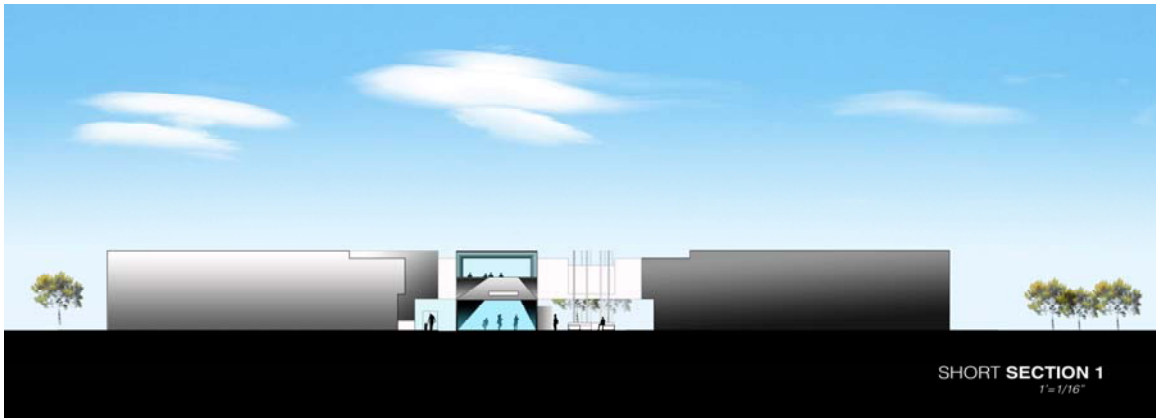




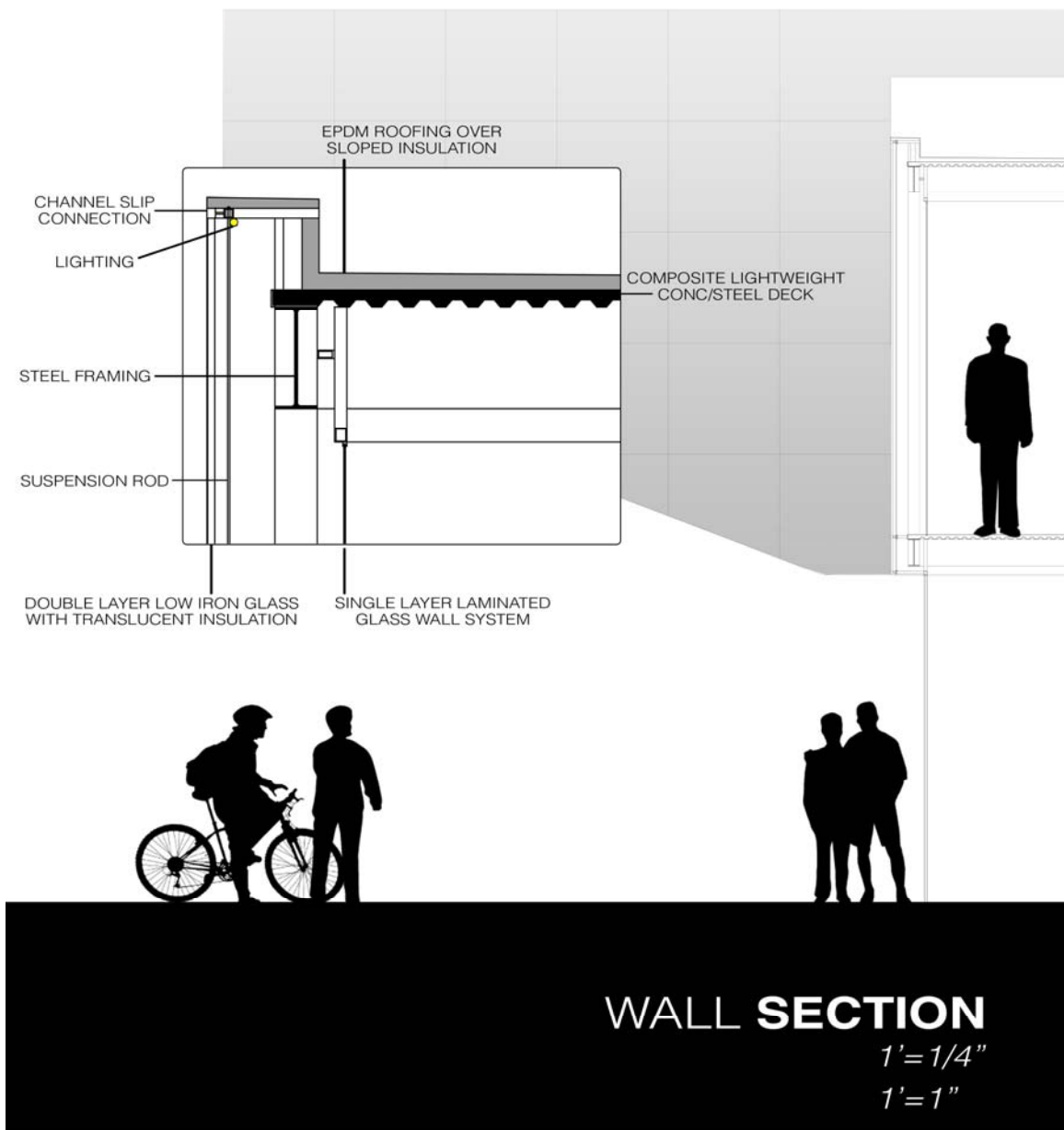






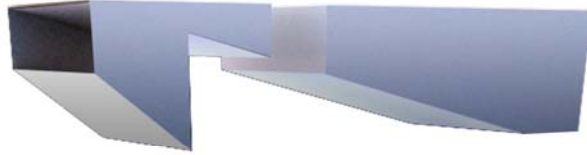






ASSEMBLY **DIAGRAM**

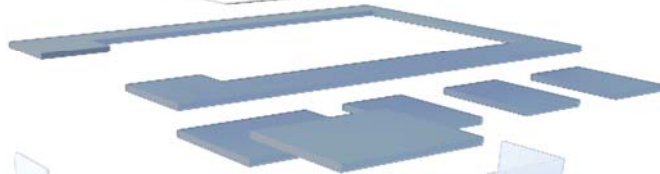
Alucobond plastic spectra panels. Different wavelengths of light are reflected back to the audience resulting in an ever-changing color gradient with iridescent highlights



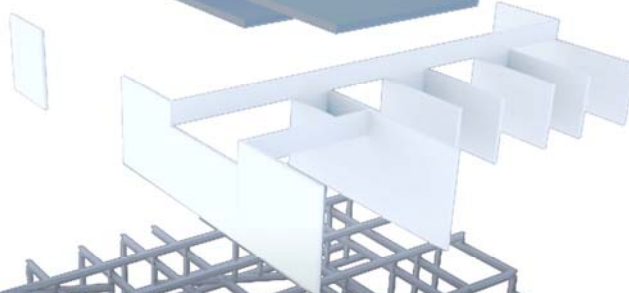
Nano-gel filled skylights.



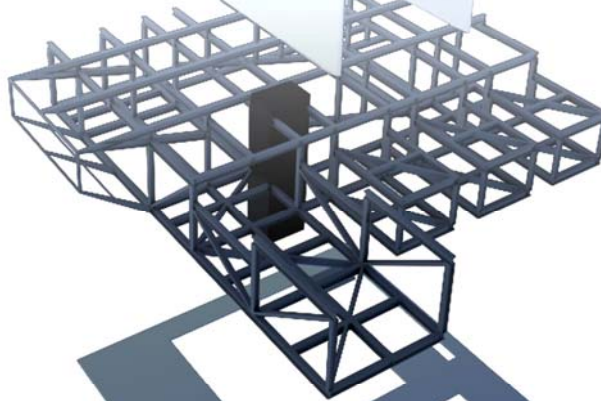
Standard roof assembly with 6 inches of foam insulation and 4 inches of concrete



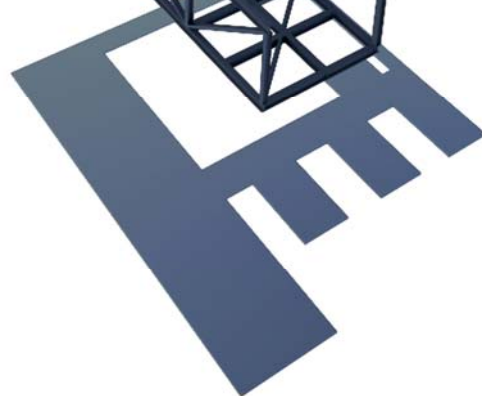
Customized Channel glass translucent panel assembly with nano-gel insulation



Steel welded moment frame using the concrete elevator core as a pivotal structural element. The structure ties into the existing building with substantial reinforcing.



Concrete floors with radiant heating.



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