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ARCHITECTURE CAN AFFECT AND INFLUENCE THE HUMAN CONDITION

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

by

KENT BRAY

Submitted to the School of Architecture as
partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Architecture

at

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

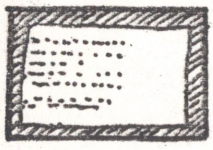
Bozeman, Montana

March, 1977

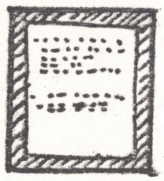
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Guide to the Display

I have used two basic sheet formats in displaying the typewritten information:

1)  horizontal mounting

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2)  vertical mounting

This information is important and it is necessary for you to read these sheets in order to understand what I have done.

There is also some written information accompanying my design suggestions. Please briefly consider this information.

Please Understand that what I am presenting to you is the means by which I have gained a clearer understanding of how man interacts with the environment.

Thank you for coming,

Kent Bray

chitecture can affect and influence the Human Condition

t you are going to experience is the process through which
died mental illness to gain an understanding of the interac-
between man and the environment.

Kent Bray

se take the time to experience

Individualism of an extreme kind is an inevitable by-product of urbanization--it occurs as part of the withdrawal from stress. This individualism is very different from healthy democratic respect for the individual's rights. It is a pathological over-belief in the self sufficiency of the individual and the indiviual family, and the refusal to permit dependences of any emotional weight to form.

"The City as a Mechanism for Sustaining Human Contact"
Christopher Alexander

The stress of urban life has not yet had an extreme and catastrophic effect on many people. Nevertheless, what is nowadays considered "normal" urban behavior is strikingly like schizophrenia: it is also marked by extreme withdrawal from stress, and this withdrawal has also led to unrealistic belief in individualism and the self-sufficiency of individuals.

"The City as a Mechanism for Sustaining Human Contact"
Christopher Alexander

It was obvious that during the intervening years Joey had made continued progress in learning to live in society, though it had not always come easy.

He came for a visit and "as is natural on such occassions, we reminised and I found our conversation so interesting that I decided to include portions of it here."

B.B. And how has life been treating you since you left us?

Joey. Oh, it's felt very different and there was lots of anxiety at times about going into a new life and doing more things for myself.

For example, I can remember when I used to feel I needed somebody to help me make friends, and now I do it all myself.

B.B. Good. And now do you have a better understanding why you came into such trouble as a child?

Joey. Yes I do. I think a great deal of it had to do with the fact that I was afraid to tell any person how I felt.

B.B. Why were you afraid? What did you think might happen?

Joey. As I can remember, I had a feeling, a long time ago, that I would find out that somebody wouldn't like me. Or something like that.

"There is of course no universal language in which every property of the world as it is can be equally and 'objectively' represented. Language is more like a theory of reality than a copy of it, as philosophers have argued. Languages act selectively on the world and at the same time systematically, and this is as ture of mathematics as of natural languages."

"How is Design Possible?"
Bill Hillier and Adrian Leaman

"People come to the cities for contact. That's what cities are: meeting places. Yet the people who live in cities are often contactless and alienated. A few of them are physically lonely: almost all of them live in a state of endless inner lonliness. They have thousands of contacts, but the contacts are empty and unsatisfying.

"What physical organization must an urban area have, to function as a mechanism for sustaining deeper contacts?"

"The City as a Mechanism for Sustaining Human Contact"
Christopher Alexander

"It is our contention that only
through the restored opportunity
for firsthand experience that
privacy gives can health and sanity
be brought back to the world of
mass culture.

"Privacy is most urgently needed and
most critical in the place where
people live, be it house, apartment,
or any other dwelling. The dwelling
is the little environment into which
all the stresses and strains of the
large world are today intruding, in
one way or another, even more deeply."

"Community and Privacy"
C.Alexander and S.Chermayeff

Isabel Halliburton says that she is going mad from noise. She lives opposite an overpass entrance to the Queensboro Bridge and the particuler noise which is driving her out of her mind is horns.

When it gets bad enough, she calls the 17th Precinct, and sometimes the sargent on duty says he will send over a patrolman, and sometimes he does.

Sometimes Isabel herself goes down. She approaches the driver of a honking car and suggests that he might serve himself and the public better by being quiet.

The other day a driver responded rudely, and Miss Halliburton took off her moderately high-heeled shoe and swung fiercely at his car hood hammering in a big dent.

The man screamed,"Do it again and I'll call a cop!" "Nothing I'd like better," Miss Halliburton responded, and delivered a second blow.

She waited a moment or two, but the driver stayed where he was, imprisoned in his raged.

WHAT'S HAPPENING JIM!

I hear voices calling me
won't you take me to the day I know
where the sun keeps shining through the snow
and you're looking at me
with the eyes of someone loved or loving

in the world of steel and the world of clowns
you don't know where you stand right now
and the change is driving you right out of your mind
or inside

and are you going to be afraid today
there are so many ways that you make your fear
the things you see and the things you hear around you

but what are you going to do when the sun goes down
and there ain't nobody else there in the town
and you have to go walking around all by yourself
in misery

but don't you see the green on the mountainside
or don't you feel the love that you fight inside
like the rock that breaks and falls into the sea
it's falling

and ol' Jim Creagan he's singing that song
and playing that guitar all day long
bringing it back to where he brought it from
he's calling

Shawn Phillips
"Collaboration"

"The consciousness of men does not determine their existence; nor does their existence determine their consciousness. Between the human consciousness and material existence stand communications and designs, patterns and values which influence decisively..."

"The Man in the Middle"
C.Wright Mills

I know that in solitary communion with nature "lies my true personality, and yet I live in an age when on all sides I am told exactly the way through which life can be developed. Am I an exception a herd outcast?"

"The Unquiet Grave"
Cyril Conolly 1945

INTRODUCTION

"define man as a stucture who knows how to affect a large number of mappings between dissimilar domains. Languages have this form, with mappings between an abstract domain of 'meaning' and a concrete domain of phonetic sounds. The architecture of architecture is equally based on such structures which include, for example, the mapping between human behavior and its spacial containment, or between psychophysiology and the environmental filter. In design the mapping structures are used as autonomic devices to solve problems. In research these mapping devices are studied in order to understandmand improve them."

"How is Design Possible?"
B.Hillier and A.Leaman

"I therefore develop the idea that architectural space may be understood as a concretization of environmental schemata or images which form a necessary part of man's general orientation or 'being in the world'"

"Existence, Space and Architecture"
Christian Norberg-Schulz

STATEMENT
"Architecture can affect and influence the Human Condition"

OVERALL CONCERN

We are involved in a continuing process of giving form to perceived realities. We do this to improve our understanding of our relationship to the environment. The process is an enduring one which, if maintained properly, prevents our return to a former state of awareness.

As architects, involved in defining problems and developing solutions, it is important that we understand this process. Architectural solutions have retroactive effects(just as phonetic sounds interpreting abstract domains of meaning do). We must approach an understanding of what influences our perception of these realities, how our perception influences the translation of these realities into form, and finally how these forms influence and affect the condition of man.

My thesis project is an approach towards understanding this process. It can be expected that no definite answers will be reached upon the completion of this project. However, my awareness of probable answers will be more acute because the definite questions that will be raised.

VEHICLE

To explore this process I am going to deal with the problem of providing environmental therapy for the mentally ill.* Because of their uniqueness much research has been carried out in an attempt to understand why they react towards their environment as they do. It is this great body of information I will take advantage of to gain insight into understanding the interaction between the environment and man.

Realize the complexity and magnitude of the problem of caring for the mentally ill. It will be impossible for me to cover all aspects of the problem. As my research progresses I will concern myself with those issues having the greatest relevency to the major goals of this thesis.

*What is meant by this term is explained at various stages throughout the display.

BACKGROUND
Characteristics of Behavior
of the Mentally Ill

It is not important that these be fully understood, that would involve a life-time study. What is important is, gaining an awareness of these behavioral characteristics for this will aid in some decision making situations.

distorted perception of the world .

disturbances in spacial perception .

incapacity to make decisions .

false feeling of self sufficiency .

notion of self lost or impaired .

INITIAL CONCEPT OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental illness is a disease that discribes a wide range of abnormal responses to everyday situations. It is defined by Bernstein in his book "Diminished People" as being "a sickness that deprives a normal person of his abilities to use his intelligence and emotions appropriately."

The cause of these abnormal reactions is difficult to pinpoint. There are two catagories however:

1. involving the body or 'soma'
2. involving the soul or 'psyche'

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Primary Goals

to return to society as productive members those suffering from stress related mental disorders

to serve progress in the health sciences

APPROACHING THE GOALS

To approach the goals of 1)returning the mentally ill to society as productive members and 2)serving progress to the health sciences, I chose to make use of E.M.Isikpinar and S.Velioglu's processes of resocialization and remotivation.

The PROCESS OF RESOCIALIZATION is a means of retraining the patient to cope with the demands of the environment from which he came. It is a means through which he can aquire the ability to maintain interdependant relationships with others.

The PROCESS OF REMOTIVATION is a means of hastening the resocialization process. Normally, the motivation of an individual "depends upon the individual's perception of himself, his expectations, his confidence, his ideals."*

*"The Therapeutic Environment- An attempt at studying the emotional content of architecture."
E.M.Isikpinar and S.Velioglu

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Presented are various design considerations offered by the various authors that I have researched. They are evaluated on the basis of to what degree they achieve a)resocialization and b)remotivation.

BIPOLAR STRUCTURING is a means of "orienting the patient's behavior towards a succession of regressive and progressive attitudes." It is achieved by using the spatial setting to "favour feelings of security and insecurity which, set off against each other, make it possible to create artificially controlled situations for therapeutic purposes."*

*Environmental Psychology, Sivadon.

INTERMEDIATE CONCEPT OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental illness is a condition manifested in perceptual disorders that prohibit appropriate use of emotions and intelligence in common or usual situations.

Mental illness does not refer to a quality of behavior as much as it does to the quantity of a behavior. Depression as a behavioral experience is normal. Depression as a way of life is a mental disorder.

FINDINGS

With the help of C.Alexander and M.H.Turan I understand STRESS as being a condition that occurs when there is a discrepency between the demands of the environment and the demands of the individual.

We are all continually under some degree of stress.

Most stresses we are able to cope with. Some we are not able to cope with.

STRAIN is a failure to cope with environmental demands. It is an indicator of stress.

Some manifestations of strain are:

- withdrawal
- annoyance
- anxiety
- discontent
- distraction

The COPING PROCESS is the means by which we deal with environmental demands. The process involves the following two variables:

1. the individual's ability to accommodate the demands of the environment
2. the capability of the environment to accommodate the demands of the individual

Mental illness is a condition evolving from a failure in either respect. Therefore it is conceivable that an approach towards a solution would be:

1. to develop the individual's ability to accommodate the environmental demands(increase his threshold for stress)
2. to create a more flexible environment(reduce the stress directly)

I will use the latter to achieve the former.

ENVIRONMENTAL FLEXIBILITY is a means by which an environment appropriately accommodates the individual. It allows space to become place. Place being an area affected by the qualities of human emotion.

Environmental flexibility will allow the individual to redevelop his relationships with the environment.

Graphically it can be shown that an optimum flexibility exists. At this time I cannot define optimum flexibility. I don't know that it actually exists.

However, I intend to explore what its limits might be, assuming it does exist.

remember that until now the term environment has been used in its comprehensive context

I now make the distinction as to what aspect of the environment I will specifically deal with. It is the physical environment contrived by man.

In this sense environmental flexibility can exist on two basic levels:

1. through manipulation of physical elements within the environment
2. through the choice of various environmental experiences.

Ideally, through manipulation of the physical elements of the environment, the individual can aquire the environmental quantity and quality he desires.

This presents again the question of what is optimum environmental flexibility. More precisely, what is optimum environmental manipulation.

To deal with this question I took a realistic approach in setting possible limits as far as what elements could be manipulated.

Elements that can be manipulated to achieve desired environmental quantity:

- moveable partitions(both rigid and pliable)
- furniture components
- plants
- pools of light
- most any found or handmade devices (eg. banners or flags)

Elements that can be manipulated to achieve desired environmental quality:

- audio
- olfactory
- visual (color and light)
- feel (texture)

all to whatever degrees achieveable.

Probably more important than the actual manipulation itself is knowing the opportunity for it exists.

Environmental flexibility through the choice of various environmental experiences puts the architect, in this case me, in the position of manipulator.

As manipulator of environmental elements I must respect my knowledge of the behavioral characteristics of the mentally ill and the processes of resocialization and remotivation.

To achieve this I will approach the design through a method of bipolar structuring, as suggested by Sivadon.*

*Environmental Psychology, Sivadon.

PRESENT CONCEPT OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Mental illness is a distorted awareness of self.

Although still a socially defined term in reference to behavior, an awareness of abnormal behavior is a justification of that behavior.

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