

"What space anyway? But the body's absence at any given point?" To Urania, Joseph Brodsky.

Working through ideas seems to involve 'drawing out' images which have somehow lodged themselves in my mind. During time spent visiting a site and in conversation with my client, certain atmospheres make space for themselves in a design. Moods are established in particular locations. The task seems often a question of establishing relationships between activities, places and situations. Finding what lies where involves covering lots of paper with marks, and making models which are then cut away to reveal tensions between forms and spaces. Working with the future inhabitants of spaces involves uncovering problems, translating words to images, herding desires. I try to configure certain definite situations in tandem with other, less explicit purposes, which can occur somewhere. Sometimes the same place has a very different character at different times of the day or week or year, and I try to evoke this sense of possible transformation in my designs. When I am designing I am conscious that some things are beyond peripheral vision, and over the horizon. The enjoyment and difficulty resides for me in the tension of this encounter. The tension between what you know, can see and control, and what you can only glimpse, sense, sniff, barely hear. By this, I mean the future unpredictable users of spaces seem to haunt the design, as portents of habitation.

I'm sure that the way these shadows take up residence in a design project is, in some ways, entirely reasonable. Nonetheless, they resist direct description. The Californian artist, Robert Irwin, distinguishes what is reasonable from what is logical: 'I can reason, but I cannot logic. I use logic'. ('Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees; a life of contemporary artist Robert Irwin', Lawrence Weschler). He believes that 'the only reliable forms of measure, as far as science is concerned, are pure abstractions.



Lavatory office
Copenhagen
Patrick Lynch Architects
2000
photograph
Patrick Lynch



green entrance
Groningen
Patrick Lynch Architects
2001
photograph
Sun Belt

Lower residence
New York
Patrick Lynch Architects
2002
photograph
Patrick Lynch

'You can count on them to be the same every time'. Whereas, an artistic enterprise involves measuring different things, differently. He amplifies this distinction:

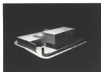
'Reasoning appears to be more confused, more haphazard, partly because of the scale of what it tries to deal with. The logical, in a sense, seems more successful because it cuts the scale down. In fact that's what makes it logical: it takes a very concise cut in the world and simply defines or refines by deduction the properties of that cut, but it never deals with the overall complexities of the situation.'

For Irwin, the notion of response and inquiry are linked together as a means of perceiving the world. In this sense, the way in which one works becomes important as a means of looking at life and encountering reality. 'The artist', Irwin suggests, 'as a reasoning being, deals with the overall complexity of which all the logical subsystems are merely segments, and he deals with them through the intuitive side of his human potential—and here inconsistencies are as meaningful as consistencies.' Processes, which glorify the act of their own production, can distract attention from the matter at hand and begin to applaud themselves. Ingenuity becomes more important often than appropriateness. It is very easy to fool yourself that what you are doing is suitable because it is clever; in fact, complexity is already there all around us and laying this bare starts to reveal intimated spaces of order, temporal scale, regularity and rhythm.

'The site in its absolute particularity dictates to me the possibilities of response', Irwin declares. Irwin's practice is similar to architecture in that it is principally concerned with place making and in amplifying the phenomena of what is already there. The relationship between perception and location is fecund ground for the material imagination. A particular mode of questioning of representation of experience spans the visual arts and also certain kinds of philosophical inquiry. The Swedish thinker Henri Bergson



Observations
Patrick Lynch Architects
2000
photograph
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Learning Resource
Centre
North Adelaide Hospital
Patrick Lynch Architects
2000-4
photograph
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McNeill residence
North Adelaide
Patrick Lynch Architects
2001
photograph
Patrick Lynch

emphasised the importance of 'the degree of our attention to life' (Matter and Memory). Bergson investigated the embodied nature of consciousness and the reciprocal status of things and ideas: 'All seems to take place as if, in this aggregate of images which I call the universe, nothing really new could happen except through the medium of certain particular images, the type of which is furnished me by my body.' Bergson's purpose was to reassemble the image of thinking as a situated event, a manner of reflecting upon reality rather than a flight from time into theory or subjectivity.

The relation of thinking to doing reveals a sense of the world and self 'in a certain activity of the mind, in a movement', Bergson posits, 'between action and representation'. In artistic terms this sense of entropy and transfiguration of things and ideas seems to hint at an ancient resonance of making as a poetic kind of thinking and doing. Robert Smithson's 'Groundworks' in the late 1960s examine the technology of digging equipment and the conceptual tools of an artist. His 'Non-Site' projects expose the rift between idealised visions of nature and order and the effect of this enfolding thought upon art and human consciousness of time and mortality. For Smithson, mental processes are organic and topographical: 'One's mind and the earth are in a constant state of erosion, mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallizations break apart into deposits of gritty reason. This movement seems motionless, yet it crushes the landscape of logic under glacial reveries.' (A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects, in *The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam). The act of creativity is similarly ontographic, it draws one out of oneself.

As a social art, architecture creates the grounds for varying points of view, identities and differences, and for expressions of communality. Architectural form expresses the impact of the world upon ideals. Regular and also irregular forms of order act as a measure of the world in response to the coincidence of action and site. Architecture is not anthropomorphic; it is not like our bodies in appearance but rather perceived by our senses. I think that the most affecting architectonic form is expressive of ideas. It is very hard to talk about the way forms arrive in or out of a design. Form making is not a logical process, it has no logos, is not immediately available to language. Finding form seems to be a skill, a practice infused with experience and memory, technical and historical knowledge and guesswork. I am suspicious of claims by architects for the representational value of an 'associationism' of shapes. Meaning in architecture seems still to be an elusive and latent aspect of spaces, material qualities, light and forms. It is as if memories of things forgotten and unnoticed can be sensed, touched, and can move us. Design is a type of measurement allowing the incommensurable to take care of itself, between matter and memories. Perhaps it is a matter of unlearning some ways of seeing and of relearning how to look.

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