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The Beginning Student of Design: Architectural Frames of Reference

Gregory S. Palermo

Iowa State University, gpalermo@iastate.edu

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The Beginning Student of Design: Architectural Frames of Reference

Abstract

There they are, every Tuesday and Thursday -- two hundred minds seeking perspective on the means by which to access architecture: to think about it, look at it and analyze it, engage in discussions about it, and experience it. Student interests and capabilities are varied because in addition to being required for pre-architecture students, this is a university general studies course -- a threshold into the adventure of architecture! This paper addresses the content and methods of introducing architectural frames of reference to the beginning student of design in the challenging large lecture learning environment. Canon and skepticism. Five frames of reference are presented through which to consider the thought-full-ness of architecture: 1) Immutable Realities of Building (Ordering Landscapes, Enclosure and Object, Interior Space); 2) Historical Perspective; 3) The 'Great' Building; 4) The 'Great' Architect; and 5) Theories of Architecture. These are countered with the questions: Where is the architecture and presence of the 'other': e.g., the less powerful people, the vanquished, the less enduring construction, women and minority architects and theoreticians? Departing from the Western historical narrative and form based theories that anchor many introductory courses, in-depth case analyses from within each frame of reference blossom to situate buildings and places, their architects, their clients, their users, and their builders in a social-political-cultural context. Complex ideas are made accessible without reduction to the simplistic which often occurs in beginning courses. The intents are to initiate the construction of an architectural knowledge base and to develop a foundation for future independent inquiry. The active learning situations and tactics of small group discussions and team generated questions, an 'anonymous' question collection cap, in-class writing exercises based upon parallel readings, a self-study on-line slide resource 'Plato's Cave', and essay based exams break down the passive lecturer-recipient character that haunts most large introductory courses.

Keywords

architectural pedagogy, beginning design education, active learning, large lecture class

Disciplines

Architectural Engineering | Architectural History and Criticism | Architecture | Landscape Architecture | Urban, Community and Regional Planning

Comments

This is a proceedings from "The Beginning Student of Design: Architectural Frames of Reference" Gregory Palermo was published in *Quality, Origins, and Foundations: Beginnings at the End of the Millennium: Proceedings of the 16th National Conference on the Beginning Design Student*, University of Nevada at Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Nevada, September 16-18, 1999; 32-38. Posted with permission.

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GREGORY S. PALERMO

Iowa State University

Abstract

There they are, every Tuesday and Thursday -- two hundred minds seeking perspective on **the means by which to access architecture**: to think about it, look at it and analyze it, engage in discussions about it, and experience it. Student interests and capabilities are varied because in addition to being required for pre-architecture students, this is a university general studies course -- a threshold into the adventure of architecture! This paper addresses the **content and methods** of introducing **architectural frames of reference** to the **beginning student of design** in the challenging **large lecture learning environment**.

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KEY WORDS: "architectural pedagogy" "beginning design education" "active learning" "large lecture class"

"But what is seeing without thinking?"

Goethe¹

There they are, every Tuesday and Thursday -- two hundred minds seeking perspective on **the means by which to access architecture**: to think about it,

look at it and analyze it, engage in discussions about it, and experience it. And for some, to help inform their beginning design work. Student interests and

capabilities are varied because in addition to being required for first-year pre-architecture students, this is a university general studies course -- a threshold into the adventure of architecture! This paper addresses the **content and methods** of introducing **architectural frames of reference** to the **beginning student of design** in the challenging **large lecture learning environment**.

Audiences and The Large Lecture Class

Architecture 182 at Iowa State is an introductory course, for both architecture and non-architecture students, that opens doors into architecture. It originated in a faculty decision to develop a "theory" or "ideas" course as a companion to first year design studio.² Engendering observing, experiencing, thinking about, and discussing architecture is the heart of it -- even if one will not be 'doing' architecture. The ambition of the course is to link *ideas* and *buildings*, and to present resources and tools that enable continuing study of architecture. The course is subtitled "Adventures in Architecture" -- capturing the spirit of the quest to come to know about architecture!

Another objective for the faculty is making architecture accessible on a broad basis -- not all people interested in architecture are going to be architects, nor do they wish to be. In this sense, the beginning student of design may be interested in architecture as part of a liberal education, just as they may study anthropology, archaeology, psychology, philosophy, political science, etc. Which is to say, architecture has validity as a general education topic alongside studies in the humanities, social sciences and the arts. We study history, literature and theater not because we will become historians, writers or a thespians, but because they are enriching explorations in themselves.

While much of architectural education takes place in small classes: 12-16 students in studio; up to 15 in seminars; core lecture courses rarely larger than 50-70, given the intended audiences and course content, diversity of learning styles, and faculty and space resources, there do exist needs/opportunities for the large lecture course. **There are two main areas of focus in this paper:** 1) **The content framework** that introduces multiple frames of reference in

architectural studies; and 2) **Active learning activities and examinations** that move beyond the "Sage on a Stage" (master speaks/empty vessel hears/repeats back) model that often dominates in large classes.

Frames of Reference

What differentiates the content sequence of this course?³ The historical approach that is typical of many introductory courses -- linking cultural themes through time and the emergence of concomitant architectural ideas -- is only one among several ways of approaching architecture. So, too, is the formal approach -- focusing on form, structure, space, light, composition, material content -- but one among many. If not an historical survey or a formal approach, what exists as an introduction? A decision was made to risk a topics based approach, an edited collection of positions not linked to the historical timeline or to the form-based armatures. In selecting and editing the topic content a certain canonical body of built works, architects and theories is privileged above others. Students should be made aware of the possibilities and limitations of any one approach, and ought to be able to recognize a particular approach when they are exposed to it.

Canon and skepticism. Five frames of reference are presented through which to consider the **thought-full-ness of architecture:** 1) Immutable Realities of Building (Ordering Landscapes, Enclosure and Object, Interior and Space); 2) Historical Perspective; 3) The 'Great' Building; 4) The 'Great' Architect; and 5) Theories of Architecture. These are **countered** with the questions: Where is the architecture and presence of the 'other': e.g., the less powerful people, the vanquished, the less enduring construction, women and minority architects and theoreticians?

While Arch 182 is not a "History of Architecture" course, much of the reading material and supporting images come from history studies. And, while it is not a "Theory of Architecture" course, architecture is explored in ideas as much or more than in stone. Architecture entails both the process of invention and construction as well as the final built re-

ality and the experience of it. **Architecture is ultimately a social act, a cultural phenomenon.** The course is designed to help portray this idea.

The **Pedagogic Objectives** for the course can be summarized briefly: **1) Develop a foundation for future independent inquiry:** • Understanding architecture as cultural process and artifact, • Building critical research and appraisal skills, • Understanding interconnectedness with other disciplines; and **2) Initiate the growth of an architectural knowledge base:** • Critical knowledge of several architectural works, • Critical knowledge of several architects, • Awareness of architecture beyond the Western canon, and • Basic conceptions of the architect and architecture.

Basic Design of the Course

Departing from the Western historical narrative and form based theories that anchor many introductory courses, **in-depth case analyses** from within each frame of reference blossom to **situate buildings and places**, their architects, their clients, their users, and their builders **in a social-political-cultural context**. Complex ideas are made accessible without reduction to the simplistic which often occurs in beginning courses. The course is presented in three distinct Parts, each with a set of lectures and class activities coupled with a required book, followed by an examination.

Part 1 introduces architecture as a "Human Affair" through a project case study and film that establish a background reference regarding the collaborative nature of designing and building, and how architecture affects the larger community. Lectures on the **First Frame of Reference** follow, addressing spatial and formal aspects of architecture that are among the "**Immutable Realities**" of the constructed landscape: Aperture and Threshold (concepts of *boundary, here and otherness*); Ceilings (boundary with the firmament); Profile and Form (consequences of the building as a material production and built object); Interiors (the consequence of bounding space); Nighttime reversals (buildings have 24 hour presence's); and Gardens (marking the larger landscape). Underlying design conceptions and cultural circumstances surrounding the works are presented.

Chambers for a Memory Palace by Donlyn Lyndon and Charles Moore (MIT Press, 1994), is required reading. In a correspondence exchange format supplemented with sketches, the authors explore certain compositional, organizing and formal principles that are used globally, by different cultures and through time, in making architecture -- which include interior spaces, buildings, and extends to urban, monumental, agrarian and garden landscapes. They guide us on an architectural tour that shows while differing cultures vested their places with differing meanings, that an identifiable set of form-giving devices, such as axes, the encompassing roof, grids that demarcate space, the harnessing of water in channels pools and fountains, and the use of human-sized figures, are created and re-created in many places and times. "Places could bring emotions, recollections, people, and even ideas to mind; their qualities were a part of a culture's intellectual equipment. ... The [chapter] titles consist of elements (nouns) and actions (verbs). The elements are ones that we have found to be present in architecture throughout the world; the actions describe how these elements shape the experiences that a place affords," (p. xi & xiii).

The second series of lectures, **Part 2**, outlines four traditional scholarly (and everyday) approaches to organizing and studying architecture. They comprise the **next four Frames of Reference: 2nd) Architectural History; 3rd) Great Buildings; 4th) Famous Architects; and 5th) Architectural Theories**. These four are presented because they are ubiquitous in the study of architecture, and by examining them, students are enabled to pursue their own explorations of architecture. The typical resources of each (such as the period history book, building and architect specific monographs, and theory collections and manifestos), and the benefits and limitations of each approach are discussed.

One applied case is presented as a model for each, respectively: The Gothic period in France from 1144-1275; in-depth presentation and comparison of two iconic buildings, the Villa Rotunda of 1570 and the Villa Savoye of 1929; in-depth presentation of a single architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, 1867-1959; and case studies of famous architectural aphorisms that work into theory discussions. Whether the beginning position is a time period and 'style', a building,

an architect, or a theoretical position, the case is unraveled: the larger historical context, the ideas, arts, politics of the era, the writings by and about the figures involved, contemporary and past writings about the building, etc., are pursued. No 'work' or 'person' is presented solely in descriptive formal or biographical terms. An excerpt from the course syllabus sets the stage:

"Architecture then has at least two principal frameworks of meaning: the archeological/historical one in which we attempt a comprehensive understanding from within its situation of origin, and the critical one which stems from the character of our contemporary lens and the commentaries upon the work [or person or time period] in the interval from its origination to the present. ... All architectural meaning is *provisional* in the sense that our *lens*, the vision of one's own time shapes the view of matters present and past. The *matter* of architecture shares with written text and the other arts, a physical presence open to interpretation. We work at developing two concurrent views: a *re-created milieu*, attempting to understand the initial context in its own terms, and that of our own, the critical view from our current perspective."

The required book for Part 2, Moshen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow's *On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time* (MIT Press, 1993), begins: "Finishing ends construction, weathering constructs finishes. ... In the process of subtracting the 'finish' of a construction, weathering adds the 'finish' of the environment," (p. 5 & 16). This extended essay explores two of the irrefutable circumstances of architecture: time and weathering, and their implications for perfection and imperfection in a work of architecture. It involves an inquiry into architecture of the 20th-C with respect to its intentions regarding form, construction, time and perfection, contrasting the work of the Le Corbusier in the late 20's with his work in the 50's, and the work of the early modernists with that of Carlo Scarpa, Louis Kahn, Eero Saarinen, *et al.* The book itself is a model of critical theoretical inquiry which brings together explorations of historical perspective, the iconic building, and the 'master' architect.

Part 3, the final lecture group, consists of thematic illustrated essays introducing various positions from which to examine or continue the study of architecture: Travel and Architectural Journals (foundations for observing, recording, and designing); Public Space in the Americas (Spanish colonial space of conquest and American Plains Indian); Speculation, Utopias and Social Criticism (architecture as an device of social-political instrumentality); The Anti-Urbanism of American Cities, etc. The intent is to explode pre-conceptions of architecture as a fixed singular building, presenting a broader disciplinary picture, one beyond the comfortable and known, to stress exploration, to provide some tools for exploration, to provoke debate.

Dolores Hayden's *The Power of Place* (MIT Press, 1995) is the required book. It serves as a **Counterpoint** to the 'march of history, great buildings and great architects' canonical approaches. "Today, debates about the built environment, history, and culture take place in much more contested terrain of race, gender, and class ... The politics of identity -- however they may be defined around gender or race or neighborhood -- are an inescapable and important aspect of dealing with the urban built environment, from the perspectives of public history, urban preservation and urban design," (p. 6 & 7). *The Power of Place* chronicles the research, marking and memorializing of certain urban places and spaces in Los Angeles. It highlights collaborative work of artists, archaeologists, architects, social activists and community processes as opposed the creativity of a single individual. Its topic is the architectural and urban space of Black women, Latinas and the Japanese and other minority immigrant cultures within the traditionally told and memorialized story of the Spanish Conquest and Anglo-Angelino male world. Coming last in the semester, this book has a profound affect upon the students, fostering healthy skepticism regarding the more traditional perspectives presented earlier.

Active Learning Exercises

A degree of intellectual rigor, and learning that goes beyond memorization, that is not often a part of this type of course is sought: the goal is the development of a capacity to engage distill and play with the ideas

of the course, to learn methods for continuing to learn about architecture, not solely to repeat back facts. Additionally, the students are asked to evaluate and discuss the ideas of the readings and lectures in a comparative manner. This is risky business in the climate of introductory education, in a course largely populated by first year university students, on two fronts: it is a method of analytic/synthetic learning that they are not used to, and it demands a level and type of performance in class and on examinations that is challenging.

Part of this approach was established in the basic design of the course. In each of the three lecture/book segments, the book stands apart from the lectures: the lectures and books were intentionally established as parallel and related, but not explanatory of each other. The objective was to provide a situation in which the students would actively engage the body of information in the lectures and the perspectives of the books and bring them together. This is an advanced model of learning, and for students who are used to preparing for short-answer exams based upon syllabus content, it is quite trying at first. However, by mid-semester they are on-board with the process and begin to sharpen the focus of their questions and writings, and approach to thinking about architecture that is inclusive and exploratory, rather than lecture/text/test dependent.

Another part of this approach was fostered by the types of in-class exercises that were issued. The design studio and seminar where students develop and present projects or present a session of the class are active learning situations *par excellence*: it is in the inventing, the teamwork and preparation for the presentations and in the presenting and subsequent dialogue and discussion that learning through doing is realized. The lecture, no matter how eloquently delivered, and the reception, no matter how well accomplished, have limits. But, nonetheless, many circumstances lead to a large lecture course without recitation sessions. How is learning beyond memorization to be accomplished?

Active Learning opportunities were built into the course, most of which include independent reflection and writing, group discussion and recording, and follow-up Q&A with the professor: 1) writing questions on cards and submitting them anonymously; 2) group discussion with colleagues seated

nearby and the generation of questions for the class; 3) individual writing and response to questions about the lectures and or books; 4) group discussion of the individual writings and recording of group questions with recorder/respondents who report for the group; and 5) large group discussions after some type of preparatory event where the professor or the professor and TA's would conduct Q&A's with a subsection of the large class. The group processes (you are not alone in this) and anonymity of question submittals ease the reluctance among students to ask questions publicly in large classes. As noted, by mid-semester things loosen up. **Examinations** are 50% essay based, and the short answer segments are designed to evaluate how well students grasped concepts rather than isolated facts. Collectively these tactics **break down the passive lecturer-recipient character that haunts most large introductory courses.**

Several **Learning Resources** were provided. Because there is no text that covers the range of information covered in the course, lecture outlines are provided for all lectures along with annotated bibliographies; a synopsis, reading tips and questions for reflection are issued for the books; review notes for the details of certain lectures are provided; and the proper names and spellings of all key words and persons are distributed. Prior to each exam, a preparation handout is provided. Following a time-honored tradition, the lectures are annotated by an independent service and sold to students, by the lecture and for the full course. The principal **innovative resource** that was developed when the course was first offered, for which the author and several others received a university Miller Fellowship grant, is Plato's Cave: an on-line slide reference that includes the slides for the lectures. Students can access Plato's Cave from any university computer. For copyright purposes, Plato's Cave cannot be accessed from the www at large.

Student Work Examples

The following are examples of student writings that resulted from the various exercises. **To some degree, writing is analogous to design work: the result is there in 'hard copy' for consideration and evaluation.** Just as the student design project

is a measure of performance, the written word remains currency in the articulation of thought. **The examples build progressively through the semester and show increasing mastery of both**

material content and methods of reflection, as well as strengthened writing skills. Each of the selections marked by a “•” is written by a different student.

Written Class Questions: Early in Semester. In the first few weeks of the semester, even anonymous written questions about *Chambers* are dominated by “exam need to know” basis. About 5-10 minutes was provided for students to generate their questions and send them forward:

• *How does the book and its content relate to the exam and lectures?* • *What is an example of a test question from Chambers?* • *By what date does this have to be finished?* • *What are we supposed to remember from the book for discussion and tests?* • *How much of the book is on test?*

There are some content questions, however. These three explore image and function, mental constructs and actual experience, and concept origination and discernment:

• *The book focuses primarily on the perception one gets of the buildings, but how do we relate that to functionality w/o losing the over-all effects & keeping the building/structure efficient?* • *Is the only difference between the axis and paths the fact that the axis is a mental construct which allows us to tie things together and a path is the physical walking along this ‘mental construct’?* • *Are all the concepts used (e.g., the axes, paths, pilasters, columns) planned? Or are they just discovered after the buildings have been constructed?*

Written Class Questions: Later in Semester. After the first exam, and well before mid-semester, both individually written and group generated written questions become more probing and directed toward professorial judgment and response. About 10-15 minutes was provided for groups to generate and record questions. These are from the middle of the semester, and pertain to *On Weathering* and Gothic cathedrals:

• *Do you think the buildings of the modern movement will stand up to weathering like the great buildings of antiquity? With today’s economy it seems to be easier to tear down and build a new building, than to restore an old building. Is this a good decision?* • *Explain, on p. 30, Le Corbusier’s glass facade [Cité de Refuge] and how it failed to maintain 18° C temp. within.* • *Tell about the intentional use of weathering for a desired effect. Do you consider human ‘wear and tear’ on a building a part of weathering? Why?* • *Who decides whether weathering adds or subtracts from the object?* • *In what ways does an architect consider weathering in designing a building?* • *Are we studying weathering for the physical aspect, or the abstract ideas we get from viewing weathering?* • *It seems that the history of architecture can also be seen as a continuous struggle: man trying to build and create versus nature trying to tear down. Do you think there is more beauty in proudly resisting nature, as many modern buildings do, or in the allowing nature to take its course but bending and controlling its effects, as many examples in the book show? Or is there a time and a place for each attitude? And what does this say about the underlying human spirit of the builder and the society?*

• *It seems as though all the Gothic architecture was cathedrals and churches, etc. Did this style get used at all for other buildings? If not, why -- were religious reasons the only reasons to spend money on art?* • *Since the backing concept of Gothic architecture was religious, based on the ‘intention of light and heavenly design’, how is/can Gothic truly be incorporated into non-religious buildings, re: castles, government buildings, and other buildings built even today?* • *In the construction of cathedrals between 1250-1300, did they use reinforcing such as iron cables or other objects besides stone to hold the structure together?* • *Why did they have to be so impressive? The need to hold pilgrims certainly didn’t call for 150 ft. high naves!!*

In-Class Essay: Mid-Semester. In addition to Q&A sessions, students are called upon to write brief essays in class, usually based upon the books. About 15-20 minutes is allotted for two open-book essays. The objective is to sharpen analytic perspective and hone writing skills.

Q: Discuss the concepts of “weathering as addition” and “weathering as subtraction.”

• *“Weathering as addition” is the concept that weathering of the building adds to the look of the building and completes the look of the building. It looks at weathering as good, as help in overall structure and appearance of the*

building. "Weathering as subtraction" is quite the contrary. This concept looks at weathering as destruction of the appearance or structure of a building, it takes weathering to be bad.

The weathering of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye can be looked at as subtractive. Le Corbusier was striving for ultimately pure and clean buildings [in his work of the late 20's]. His emphasis was on whiteness. Weathering of the Villa Savoye dirtied this 'whiteness' thus destroying the goal of his architecture.

I believe these concepts should definitely be considered by all architects when designing any building. One must think of what the building is going to look like in 20 years or even 100 years, if they want that building to survive. And, depending upon the maintenance the building is planned to have, the architect should decide on whether they want to welcome weathering or fight it. The theme of the building and its location should be considered when making this decision.

Q: Discuss the different meanings of the word "weathering" as they relate to the construction of a building and the life of a building in time.

• Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow define weathering in two ways: as "whatever controls the action of the weather" p. 36, and as a "process that can productively modify a building over time," p. 42. Both of these definitions imply that weathering can be harnessed, even tamed, to exert a positive influence on a building. In construction, effects of weathering subtraction can be anticipated and avoided through things like placement of stone (to avoid cracking) and installation of "drips" (to prevent water damage).

The second definition implies that, in the design of a building, weather effects can be incorporated into the finishing of materials. For example, stones could be left rough-cut to allow nature to smooth and refine during the life of the building in time. In these definitions, the authors point out the lesser-known positive possibilities of the weathering process, which is often seen only in a negative light.

Oral Q&A: Late in Semester. By the final third of the semester, the students are comfortable with question and answer dialogue. They know each other better, and a situation of trust has developed in which their questions are respected. They continue their probing, although more informally, and do not limit themselves to course content. The questions here have been taken from a transcript:

• *If the jury were held to day for the Chicago Library Competition [viewed the PBS documentary in class], would the outcome be different? Is the city happy with the results?* • *Describe the differences among a) travel guides, b) personal journals, c) architect's travel drawings and journals, and d) travel literature again.* • *What are some of research projects of the faculty, and yourself in particular?* • *Is architecture a dying profession given all that interior designers and engineers are doing?* • *What is the role of architects in historic preservation and adaptive re-use today?* • *Much of the discussion in the course seems to focus on the abstract ideas about architecture rather than the concrete and technical side of it as a physical reality. Why?*

Written Questions: Late in Semester. Examples of the shift brought about by Hayden's *Power of Place* follows. The nature of the questions reveals a new mood from mid-semester. The directness reveals a certain awakening:

• *Why is it that in order to get a general view of the more liberal areas of urban form (i.e.: women designers, social consequence of urban form) we must turn to a woman author? It seems such material is never covered by male WASPS. [male student]* • *Do you feel that covering up the past by building new is a result of being ashamed of our past? Do we through architecture try to preserve or try to erase the past?* • *Was it only because of occupational segregation, racial segregation, and economic hardship that women were represented so poorly for the deeds and tasks they accomplished, or was there more reasoning behind the prejudice? [woman student]* • *On pages 85 & 86, Dolores Hayden says about 97% of LA's historical landmarks are to commemorate rich white males, only 2% are other races, and 4% are women. Until recently, only a very small number of women and minorities have been able to hold an important position or do something to be remembered ... What kind of landmarks would historicize these people? How would we bring these numbers up?* • *Do you think that one possible reason for the lack of monumental architecture for the minority, Chinese, women and black was because for the longest time our society was white, male dominated? Are there gradually more monuments for minorities emerging or not?* • *The average person -- lay-person -- seems to have the biggest impact on the Power of Place, yet they are not generally acknowledged. Why is that?* • *How can architects "have missed the role of people in creating a 'place' because they are trained to look at people as users of space"? The ways in which people use space are greatly dependent on ethnicity, social class, culture, and traditions. How can architects overlook this fact when creating space?*

Essay Test Response: Lectures on Form and Space (Part 1 of Course). In the early part of the semester, questions are framed to establish the direct relevancy of the issues being discussed to personal experience. Exam Q: Lectures 4a Aperture, 4b Ceilings, 5a Profile, 7a Gardens, 7b Nighttime, and 8a The Interior, addressed fundamental aspects of the environment. Think about the ISU campus. Select three different basic concepts from the lectures and discuss them in terms of three different places on campus:

- *A good example of garden on campus is Lagomarcino Hall. As you enter the walls of the building on the south side, you don't enter into a room, but into a courtyard surrounded by the building. From the inner circle of the interior the garden is a beautiful scene. The courtyard is not only a beautiful place, but it is also a quiet and relaxing place to study or just sit and enjoy the surroundings. The courtyard is an extension of the building, like the Hearst Gardens where the gardens extend off the buildings and seem to go on forever. Yet it is still encompassed by almost four walls so it is contained at the same time.*

Driving up to campus on Welch at night, you get a wonderful view of the southside of Alumni Hall. The rounded walls, normally somewhat nondescript, come alive when lit up at night. It is essentially like the Paris Opera House [Opera Bastille] that goes from black to illuminated when night falls, although not quite as dramatic a change. On either side there is a soft glow at the bases of the columns, which adds more life to the building, but still enhances the rounded wall. The columns seem to dominate during the day, but take backstage at night, as the profile of the Paris Opera House does the illuminated room.

One of the best examples that I have seen of ceiling, is the ceiling in Beardshear. All along the edges, decoration entertains and entrances anyone stopping to catch a closer glimpse. The ceiling continues in this fashion up to a dome that highlights the whole building. It also is a very central part of the building as a whole. Each floor has a circle cut out so even people on the bottom floor can look up and enjoy the beauty of the dome. The dome added to the architecture of the entire building in this way. The railing around the circle, allows for observers to rest, look up and enjoy, or resters to do the same and gain something through it. (A)

Essay Test Response: Power of Place (Part 3 of Course). Exam Q: Develop an essay defining and exploring several of the concepts in the *Power of Place*.

- *In Dolores Hayden's book The Power of Place, many different ideas and themes were presented that all relate back to a central concept -- the ability and power of people everywhere on this earth to interact with the landscape, simultaneously producing architecture and history.*

This book has special meaning to me personally as a student studying architecture. After half a semester of studying famous architects and society's high culture, it is easy to overlook the other aspects and possibilities of architecture, and even easier to overlook altogether the unseen forces and struggling people that have shaped our landscape. James Roja's comment on how architect's formal training causes them to look past the people and only see the building furthers my realization, "Architects have missed the role of people in creating a 'place' because they are trained to look at people as users of space ... People are both users and creators of place ... People activate settings merely by their presence." (p. 87)

This problem of people being overlooked in relation to architecture is much of what this book is about, along with the non-profit organization originally using the book's name. The Power of Place begins by discussing "contested terrain," relating the debate between Herbert Gans, an urban sociologist, and Ada Louise Huxtable, an architectural critic, to the struggle of people today attempting to save vernacular history (p. 3). Today the Power of Place focuses on the theses of communication, education and collaboration -- a future different from the past described by Hayden. Referring to the Gans/Huxtable debate, "In this exchange from two decades ago, a leading urban sociologist and distinguished architectural critic were unable (or unwilling) to understand each other's language." (p. 4)

With remembrance and education as their goal, groups like the 'Power of Place' collaborate with a host of different people and specialists, including historians, sociologist, local residents, artist's, poets, architects and landscape architects, etc. When devising and brainstorming about the most effective way to educate the public of the true essence of a place and its people, these groups use several different methods.

The most moving example of a method for public education is the context of a "sensory experience" is the actual site or building itself -- the place where people lived their everyday lives through history while forming history. ... Another method involves remembering a site through artists' means because the structure is no longer present, as demonstrated at the Biddy Mason memorial. These collaborative processes allow for creative inspiration, and the forming of new areas of public space. ...

This book clearly defines the concept that the struggle of life, while at times may be a horrible monster, is truly a gift to be remembered. Everyone on earth finds a way to form a place, whether it is by selling flowers [Japanese immigrant industry] or erecting grand monuments. Unfortunately our culture overlooks the flower salesman ... The Power of Place successfully tells the story of the that flower salesman and explains why he/she are notable and special. ... (A+)

Concluding Comment

A paper that is based upon a lecture course, with examples of writing rather than the more normally expected studio project designs, may seem to be out of place at a conference titled "The Beginning Design Student." The play on the conference theme in the title of this paper "Beginning Student of Design" is not without intent. All initiates grapple with thinking•making•representing in architecture. Writing is part of that representing. Humbly extending Goethe's "What is seeing without thinking?" I propose "What is thinking without communicating?"

Notes:

1. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Italian Journey (1786-1788)*, trans. W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (New York: Penguin Books USA, 1970), 71
2. Iowa State has a 1+4 structure to its five year B. Arch. program. Pre-architecture students take a required 4 credit design studio, Arch 102, and the 3 credit lecture course, Arch 182, which is described in the catalog: "Through the study of architects, buildings and theories, this course is designed to introduce the discipline of architecture, presenting architectural process and architectural works as culturally grounded events and artifacts."
3. **Introductory Resource Books.** There are a number of books which provide an introduction to architecture, each with its strengths and weaknesses. From the selections here, the *Roth* and *Conway/Roenisch* books are new introductory textbooks with very good overviews of many aspects of architecture. *Hellman's Architecture for Beginners* is a fast paced lively overview of architecture. The *Stern* and *Kostof* books are companion books to PBS television series of the same names: Hazel Conway and Rowan Roenisch, *Understanding Architecture: An Introduction to Architecture and Architectural History* (London: Routledge, c. 1994), very good introduction arranged in topical fashion; Sinclair Gauldie, *Architecture, The Appreciation of the Arts/1*, gen. ed. Harold Osborne (London: Oxford University Press, c. 1969), driven by aesthetics and formal issues; Louis Hellman, *Architecture for Beginners* (Beginners Documentary Comic Book, New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., c. 1988); Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man: Shaping the Environment from Prehistory to the Present Day* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, c. 1975), human settlement and architecture shapes the landscape -- this remains perhaps the finest introduction to cultural foundations and landscape architecture; Spiro Kostof, *America By Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, c. 1987); John Julius Norwich, ed., *Great Buildings of the World: An Illustrated History from Stonehenge to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Bonanza Books/Crown Publishing, c. 1978), very good graphics, many 'three-dimensional' drawings; Patrick Nuttgens, *The Story of Architecture* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., c. 1983, 1995 pbk. printing), excellent brief survey introducing the scope of architecture, much non-Western material included; Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2nd U. S. edition, c. 1962), a classic introduction to the formal, spatial and experiential aspects of architecture, though gender references are dated by today's standards, it is perhaps still the best book of its kind; Leland M. Roth, *Understanding Architecture: Its Elements, History & Meaning* (New York: Icon Editions/HarperCollins, c. 1993); Paul Shephard, *What is Architecture?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, c. 1994); Robert A. M. Stern, *Pride of Place: Building the American Dream* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, c. 1986).
4. **Tectonics Resources:** Architecture is realized through material fabrication. These three principal works, each a classic in its own right, highlight the material, structural and environmental engineering aspects of architecture: its tectonics: Reyner Banham, *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment* (London: The Architectural Press/Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c. 1969); Cecil D. Elliott, *Technics and Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, c. 1992); Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture*, edited by John Cava, Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago (Cambridge: MIT Press, c. 1995)