I, YoonJin Kim, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture (Master of).

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Recovering Sensory Pleasure Through Spatial Experience

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Recovering Sensory Pleasure Through Spatial Experience

*Library of Rare Books*

A thesis submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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By

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Abstract

In today’s world we have largely lost the pleasure of bodily engagement. Since we are living in the world with our modernized equipment, we do not have to actively move our bodies to experience something. Our bodies get used mainly for watching something. We forget the pleasure of bodily experiences such as walking, hearing, smelling, and touching; we have been losing sensory meanings related to the world: the ground, the sky, the air, and the world. Architecture is implicated in this loss, having become more focused on instant images rather than either practicality or sincerity. As a result, most of contemporary architecture has been stuck in ocularcentrism; one confronts the built world without one’s body and eventually weakens the existential depth of human being.

The study will focus on defining what embedded meanings are responsible for initiating bodily engagement, what the pleasure of bodily engagement is and what architectural sensitivities can be manipulated. Mainly, the architectural works of Tadao Ando will be analyzed through six traditional Japanese aesthetic values including those he refers to as disciplines. Also, poeticized works of international architects Peter Zumthor and Steven Holl, which are deeply related to bodily sensory experiencing, will be examined according to these same experiential values: Shintai, Ma, Wabi-sabi, Mono no aware, Kire, and Oku no Hosomichi.

Finally, through the design of a rare book library for downtown Los Angeles, this thesis revisits the neglected senses in order to re-sensualise architecture through spatiality, materiality, sequence, light and mood. Through the explanation of these attributes, the design ultimately pursues the status of mindfulness.
Acknowledgement

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Being-in-the-world
Relationship between thing and world

Embodied Perception
Pre-thought and pre-consciousness

Bodily Engagement
Life-enhancing
The Theory Of The Body Is Already A Theory Of Perception

The thing, and the world, are given to me along with the parts of my body, not by any ‘natural geometry’, but in a living connection comparable, or rather identical with that existing between the parts of my body itself.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

There is no objectivity and no subjectivity. It is described as the process of letting things manifest themselves.

William J. Richardson

Chapter 1
Introduction

Being-in-the-world

Relationship between thing and world

We live in a ‘lifeworld’ in which our spontaneous and ordinary experiences of the world are saturated. The lifeworld does not come from any theorizing about experience nor from the prior elimination of any realms of meaning whatsoever. It is about “a constantly shifting and changing horizon in which consciousness is enveloped.”

According to John E. Hancock, “such a world of unthought, unseen relationships and meanings, what phenomenology calls the ‘lifeworld’, is always already understood, simply by our living, before any conscious act of analysis or contemplation, including scientific investigation, even begins.” For example, a sunset is not merely about the daily disappearance of the sun below the horizon in the west nor is it primarily a matter of the earth’s rotation and refracting light waves. It is a part of our life that is rolling together. We just feel everything is calming down including our body when the sun sets. It is a sense that things need to be ‘home’ and at rest. In this way, we also already know that the time is for awakening and an activating mode when the sun rises. We always already know what the sunset means in the lifeworld, which is a more primordial reaction, or pre-thought condition before ‘knowing’ it scientifically or theoretically.

To know being-in-the-world we have to recognize that scientific knowledge, although objectively true, blocks our ability to go through it in order to grasp an understanding of things with their lived meanings and contexts still intact being-in-the-world. It is in the way that things are always already there and it is this knowledge that has layered up embodied memories so we know it prior to any objectification. Thus, as Edward Relph says, “We are already in a direct and immediate relationship with the world. [...] There is not self-conscious reflection about what or how things are. One already knows.”

4 Edward Relph, “Geographical experiences and being-in-the-world: The phenomenological origins of geo-
There is a philosophically well-known example, a “jug.” We see it from the view of physical facts such as a size, color, material, or location. It is an objectified view. Or, we can perceive truth in terms of personal memories like, “Mom gave it to me on my birthday”, which is subjective. The truth-ing of the jug is richer than objective but more specific than subjective. The role of the jug in the human life world is a gift of outpouring. By pouring water or wine into the jug, it could be a way of showing a relationship between people or in a community. Through defining the human relationships with a jug, it emerges as ritual ceremony, with respect or thoughtfulness, and it becomes “presencing” that is the way of the jug’s being-in-the-world. So, being-in-the-world would be every instant of life’s moments, full of meanings based on horizontal fusions of context. And it is a fundamental way of our existence.

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Figure 1.2 Gift of outpouring

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5

as introduced by Martin Heidegger in his essay, “The Thing,” in Poetry, Language, Thought, (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2001)
PIANO PLAYER   Sandy Forbes

My fingers sit lightly, so sweetly on the keys
Slowly brewing an harmonic melodic breeze
And yes, my emotions, they are raging
Hoping for release—
At my piano, there is no caging
The torrid sentimental on the keys

Delving in deeper
I hear a song in the midst
My utensils they linger in piano bliss
And if you should enter this musical rampage
Don’t let me see you, don’t you rain on my parade!

Embodied Perception

Pre-thought and pre-consciousness

Then, how do we ‘already’ ‘always’ know?

When the organ music is played in a cathedral, we listen to it with our ears. But it would be hard to say that we merely use our ears since our heart, brain, skin, muscle, and memory also react to the music in some ways. We would come to have an emotional movement such as wonder, awe, or religious ecstasy even though the organ music has not been listened to before, or there is no relation with Christianity. What we feel inside of ourselves is based on pre-personal consciousness, embodied perception.

The perception that I will keep considering through all chapters is not just about receiving information from objects or stimuli. Eric Mattews said, “Merleau-Ponty’s use of the term ‘perception’ does not refer to passively receiving ‘representations’ given from outside and then interpreting them. It is a direct contact with the world, an ‘active engagement with the things around us.’ Our pre-existing, pre-structured interest in things shapes the character of our engagement and hence the meanings that they have in our world, before either reflection or language happen.”

---

Merleau-Ponty argues that the lived foundation of this human-world enmeshment is perception, which, in turn, relates to the lived body—in other words, a body that simultaneously experiences, acts in, and is aware of a world that, normally, responds with immediate patterns, meaning, and contextual presence. Merleau-Ponty understands the lived body as a latent, lived relationship between an intelligent but pre-reflective body and the world it encounters and perceives through continuous immersion, awareness, and actions. As philosopher David Morris writes, “the lived body is one’s intentional opening to the world, through which alone one experiences meaningful things in the first place.”

David Seamon

\[\text{Figure 1.4 Sequence 2006, Richard Serra}\]

Bodily Engagement

Life-enhancing

Richard Serra’s work is a great example to understand what embodied perception is and how it would come up. When we go through his path made by tilted curving walls, our bodies sense tension along with the walls. The body unconsciously or consciously becomes nervous and pays attention to the surroundings. It does not come from logical thinking but from intuitive reactions of muscles, the body. In other words, the body would try to be balanced in ‘unbalanced’ surroundings in a way of engagement so it comes to be attentive to itself and its relationship with the world.

When we have an engagement in something, it works by both mental and physical involvement. The very first plugging mode of engagement is triggered by bodily senses. The body strokes surround- ings using visual, auditory, haptic, olfactory and even gustatory senses. The embodied perception takes place through sensory experience, and it would easily adumbrate experiential memories.

We would have much more meaningful and rich moments of life if the pleasure of the body were reevaluated in terms of awareness of our existence. Tadao Ando constantly emphasizes the relationship between the human body and the world through his architectural works. He said,

…Man articulates the world through his body. Man is not a dualistic being in whom spirit and the flesh are essentially distinct, but a living corporeal being active in the world. The “here and now” in which this distinct body is placed is what is first taken as granted, and subsequently a “there” appears. Through a perception of that distance, or the living of that distance, the surrounding space becomes manifest as a thing endowed with various meanings and values. Since man has an asymmetrical physical structure with a top and a bottom, a left and a right, and a front and back, the articulated world, in turn, naturally becomes a heterogeneous space. The world that appears to man’s senses and the state of man’s body become in this way interdependent. The world articulated by the body is a vivid, lived-in space. The body articulates the world. At the same time, the body is articulated by the world.

Thus, the body needs to be considered in terms of not merely a messenger but an independent organ that has its own experiential and embodied memories.

Chapter 2
Existential Depth in Architecture

Critique of Images on Retina

Architecture of visual images

Poetically-Dwelling

Nearness
Chapter 2
Existential Depth In Architecture

Critique of Images on Retina

Architecture of visual images

"The loss of temporality and the search for instantaneous impact" in contemporary expression are related to the loss of experiential depth. 8

Most efforts in contemporary architecture have been oriented to how it could be immediately revealed by edge, surface, and form, rather than how it could ignite imagination that is beyond mere images on the retina.

Juhani Pallasmaa has made a diagnosis of the current situation in architecture "as a consequence of the current deluge of images." 9 As he has stated, it is clear how homogenous bright light has prevailed in current architecture. To emphasize images on the retina, it is imperative. But Pallasmaa points out that "homogenous bright light paralyses the imagination in the same way that homogenisation of space weakens the experience of being, and wipes away the sense of place." 10

As buildings lose their plasticity, it becomes hard to have "the language and wisdom of the body." Pallasmaa continues by saying "With the loss of tactility, (or) measures and details crafted for the human body," architecture changes to have different pursuits such as immateriality, agelessness and instant eye capturing images. 11

The body breathes in space. By breathing we are communicating with empathy to the world. Unless the architect has to endeavor to create an imaginary room, it would be nearly impossible to have questions on how our lives are being related to the world and what kind of meanings and values are found in our period. We hardly have any experiential depth within the sharpness of vision since it is totally unnecessary to experience other senses for thinking, imagining, or meditating, when everything

8      David Harvey, The condition of postmodernity, (Malden Blackwell Publishing 1990), p58
10     Ibid, p 46.
11     Ibid, pp 30-31
How much more mysterious and inviting is the street of an old town with its alternating realms of darkness and light than are the brightly and evenly lit streets of today! The imagination and daydreaming are stimulated by dim light and shadow. In order to think clearly, the sharpness of vision has to be suppressed, for thoughts travel with an absent-minded and unfocused gaze.

Mist and twilight awaken the imagination by making visual images unclear and ambiguous; a Chinese painting of a foggy mountain landscape, or the raked sand garden of Ryoan-ji Zen Garden give rise to an unfocused way of looking, evoking a trance-like, meditative state. The absent-minded gaze penetrates the surface of the physical image and focuses in infinity.

Likewise, the extraordinarily powerful sense of focus and presence in the paintings of Caravaggio and Rembrandt arises from the depth of shadow in which the protagonist is embedded like a precious object on a dark velvet background that absorbs all light. The shadow gives shape and life to the object in light. It also provides the realm from which fantasies and dreams arise. The art of chiaroscuro is a skill of the master architect too. In great architectural spaces, there is a constant, deep breathing of shadow and light; shadow inhales and illumination exhales light.

According to Pallasmaa, the body has more existential potential than vision in order to have a relationship with the world.

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Based on examining the current situation that has distanced sensuous pleasure, the re-sensualising of architecture through sensory experiences integrated with the bodily engagement would help make life more meaningful since it gives room for imagination, thinking, and meditation on how ‘I’ am related to the world.
We breathe in space. According to Karsten Harries's definition of the dwelling space, “the space we inhabit is not the homogeneous space of Euclid. We live in heterogeneous space. Furthermore, that heterogeneity is inevitably charged with meaning.”\(^{13}\) As the space ultimately allows us to let ourselves soak into deep thought and care; we dwell in it. Harries said, “[...] dwelling, in an existential sense, is the purpose of architecture. Man dwells when he can orientate himself within and identify himself with an environment, or, in short, when he experiences the environment as meaningful.”\(^{14}\) Thus, dwelling refers to something more than shelter. It implies the space where the body comes to open the world, soak into the world, and bring memories from the intertwining of ‘I’ and the world. The relational distance between humans and the world is the criterion in order to understand whether humans dwell or not. When we can say we dwell in some places, we would like to stay there more than other spaces. It is brought by embodied memories that would be meaningfully related to one’s life. When this relational distance between humans and the world is closer, which means we hardly feel alienation in the world, we can say the relationship has ‘nearness’. Specifically, it can be acquired through bodily engagement. Therefore, ‘nearness’ should be the one that needs to be considered in order to create the space of dwelling.

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Chapter 3
Interpretation of Spirituality

Japanese Aesthetic / Philosophical Concepts

Shintai
- 神体

Ma
- 間

Wabi-sabi
- 侘寂

Mono no aware
- 物の哀れ

Kire
- 切れ

Oku no Hosomichi
- 奥の細道
In general, we experience differences in ritual or sacred space. We would emotionally respond to the space and sentiments like wonder, awe, or tranquillity. It means that we strongly engage in the space having both mental and physical involvement. Before we mentally get involved with the space, engaging in something is initially triggered by bodily senses. For instance, we would smell incense first at the threshold level of a temple, or we even hear the rustling sound of leaves before we notice what they look like. Then, we immediately realize that we are in a very tranquil mood so we get back the ability of bodily sensitivity. The body often senses more subtlety in a ritual environment than an ordinary life because of different spatiality.

The instability of the environmental condition in Japan has contributed to establishing an essential relationship between humans and nature. Japanese people have gone through so many natural disasters, specifically earthquakes, that their culture has been developed in a way of spiritual and religious ritual. This allows for a peaceful everyday life so that they feel that they can reconcile with the incomprehensible world.

Because of the unstable status of the environment, Japanese people have been faced with death unexpectedly, frequently, and undoubtedly with concerns about salvation of their soul. There are two different ways to get salvation from chaos according to Zen, which begins in the twelfth century. One is traditional faith that worship will rescue and lead them to salvation. The concepts of Shintai and Ma are on this line. Another is self-salvation through Zen. Jennifer L. Anderson explains, “[...] followers of Zen shared the conviction that anyone could be enlightened. Furthermore, they believed this goal could be achieved through a personal commitment to cultivate one’s mind.”

Therefore, enlightenment through self-reflection and self-reconstruction became the way to realize the Buddha, self-salvation. Wabi-sabi, Mono no aware, Kire and Oku no Hosomichi are concepts driven by self-observation for the insight of religious ritual is eventually meant to induce symbolic thought and action that is focused on salvation and interpretively grounded in mythical or cosmological formulations of a general order of existence. Norman J. Girardot

In both cases, the roles of the mediator in delivering the holiness or divine messages have become important. Also, the place that supports people to get ‘salvation’ through meaningful symbols and moods should be thoughtfully considered as ritual and meditative spaces as well.

With the main six concepts of Japanese aesthetic and philosophical ideas (Shintai, Ma, Mono no aware, Kire and Oku no Hosomichi) as a parameter of sensory experiential spaces, the study aims to understand each fundamental philosophy and interpret each of them into architectural application with precedents.

“[…] the communication of meaning in religion takes place through symbols.”
Clifford Geertz
Yoshiro Tamura defines Shintai as “physical objects worshiped at or temporary repositories in which spirits, kami reside. Kami is any thing or phenomenon that produces the emotions of fear and awe, with no distinction between good and evil.” In the ancient religions, kami were understood as simply the divine forces of nature. Worshippers in ancient Japan revered creations of nature which exhibited a particular beauty and power such as waterfalls, mountains, boulders, animals, trees, grasses and even rice paddies. They strongly believed the spirits or resident kami deserved respect.

By appeasing the kami, Japanese people believe that they can reach a pure sincere heart, meaning salvation. Since they have a faith that the purifying heart can only be taken by kami when it is satisfied with that devoted heart, Shintai is important as a place of mediation where people can have sentimental contact with kami. As a mediator, Shintai should have an aura that creates a spiritual mood that helps people focus on meditating and praying.

The mood of Shintai comes up at the very first level of threshold by demarcating boundaries between secular and sacred spaces. Representative examples are stacked stones, hempen paper and rice straw rope. While the essence of materiality comes from nature, the configuration in terms of formal language is obviously generated by the manmade, which is usually crafted.

Having an ordered thing configured by man in disordered nature alludes that something different from the secular world will be unfolded starting with it. It gives a foreshadowing before the main space to help people have a different mindset.

Shintai
神体
Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   Katsura Villa
   Senbon Torii Gate
   Temizuya
   Traditional Japanese Tea Room

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   Tadao Ando | Koshino House
   Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum
   Kengo Kuma | Starbucks Dazaifu

3. International Architecture
   Michael Arad & Peter Walker | 911 Memorial
   Daniel Libeskind | The Jewish Museum
   Peter Zumthor | Therme Vals

The steppingstones line the pathway. Since each stone has its own roughness of surface on the top and they are located in slightly different positions, residents or visitors are required to pay attention to each step. It is not an easy way to walk through without extra consciousness. This kind of consciousness that occurs during walking through the steppingstone path brings people sensory experience. They experience the ground, meaning the body actively engages in the space. The different mode of bodily engagement is primary for changing gear into a meditative mind status before the sacred space.

All columns and girders colored in vermillion, and natural daylight penetrates through the limited gaps. So, an extraordinary mood is created. As an approach path, its fearsome and superstitious atmosphere is so effective that all those who walk through here will experience something of a divine feeling.17

The repetition of columns generates depth of passage, unfolding different narratives than outside. Even though this passage is still outside space in which there is much more airy room, the space enveloped by the row of columns is definitely creating a focused spatiality.

When you enter a temple, you may see a temizuya or a place where you can wash your hands and rinse your mouth. This washing ritual is to purify your actions and the words that come out of your mouth.18

This symbolic spot gives people a clear idea of transition of space. Because people are coming from an unclean place and going into a clean space, washing hands symbolizes the purification. Washing hands outside is an unnatural action. However, the meaning behind doing this odd thing is simple and convincing, so that people would be able to be absorbed in the mood of sacred space following the hand-washing.

Shintai

Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   - Katsura Villa
   - Senbon Torii Gate
   - Temizuya
   Traditional Japanese Tea Room

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   - Tadao Ando | Koshino House,
   - Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum
   - Kengo Kuma | Starbucks Dazaifu

3. International Architecture
   - Michael Arad & Peter Walker | 9/11 Memorial
   - Daniel Libeskind | The Jewish Museum
   - Peter Zumthor | Therme Vals

The garden path is a row of stepping stones leading to the tea room; it is so called because it goes through a small garden with rocks and shrubs. At the symbolic level, it represents a path from the ordinary world to the other world. Anyone who treads the garden path to a tea room should be prepared to purify himself to enter this other world.

The process of purification becomes actualized when we focus on ourselves. In this case, it is a transitional sequence towards awakening bodily senses before the tea ceremony. Architectural devices should support the process so that people come to be deeply saturated in the mood of the tranquil space.

The steppingstones lead people to the entrance of the tearoom. It requires them to perform one action to enter the space. Everyone joining the tea ceremony has to take off their shoes on the curb first. Then, they should crouch over the entrance to enter the space. The entrance is somehow small and it is located at an awkward height, which means it is an architectural device forcing people to actively join a ritual sequence. Crawling the body in front of the entrance is an apparent gesture of the body willing to enter the space. And people would get a very clear meaning that they have come to a different space by doing bodily gestures.

The repetitive and intentionally slow motions of the tea master seem like choreographic movements. It is important to make the mood in the tearoom ritualized and to get the people who have come to partake in the ceremony to pay attention to the tea master.

With ritual movements, the tearoom becomes dim because the tea master closes all the windows to make the space darker, so that other senses have a chance to experience the ritual. Everyone in the tearoom becomes able to hear all the sounds around them such as water boiling, dripping, leaves rustling, whisking and even sipping sound. Also, people would feel warm from the steam of the boiling water. Sensory experiences become heightened during the tea ceremony. All of a sudden, the body is able to ‘see’ subtlety that it cannot ‘see’ in ordinary life.
1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   - Katsura Villa
   - Senbon Torii Gate
   - Temizuya
   - Traditional Japanese Tea Room

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   - Tadao Ando | Koshino House
   - Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum
   - Kengo Kuma | Starbucks Dazaifu

3. International Architecture
   - Michael Arad & Peter Walker | 9/11 Memorial
   - Daniel Libeskind | The Jewish Museum
   - Peter Zumthor | Therme Vals

Ando has adopted concrete to treat it as the main substance of architecture, and it becomes ontologically presenced in his works. In his Koshino House, the passage made of concrete walls gives compression that makes people walk through it, and it gives a target to be arrived at the end of the path by having the brightest moment. Also, through slits on the concrete side-wall, the light penetrates the depth of material, guiding people to the target light.

The dramatic chiaroscuro and spatial depth contribute to the phenomenological existence of his architecture as well as a waken the sensual self-awareness of body, meaning we will be able to ‘already’ ‘always’ know where we have to go in the space.

The jagged stones are scattered on the floor. But constrained edges emerge very soon through limited planar boundaries. This is on the same methodology of Shintai. By having an ordered configuration of stones, especially of random or chaotic shapes, this spot is able to have eye-catching oddness, like Shintai does. This space gives people a temporary pause of movement and allows them to have an imaginary room in mind.

The Dazaifu store is located at the main approach to one of the most prestigious and popular shrines in Japan. The wooden weaving expresses a sense of depth and customers of the café might feel that they drink coffee in a forest.

Before people enter the shrine, they must pass by the café. This café creates a mood which people then carry with them as they enter the temple. Even though the program of the building is a café, it generates a somehow sacred atmosphere which definitely considers the upcoming shrine. Specifically, the aggregation of wooden weaving units generates unique depth of layering, evoking an elaborated ritual atmosphere.
Shintai 神体

Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   - Katsura Villa
   - Senbon Torii Gate
   - Temizuya
   - Traditional Japanese Tea Room

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   - Tadao Ando | Koshino House, Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum
   - Kengo Kuma | Starbucks Dazaifu

3. International Architecture
   - Michael Arad & Peter Walker | 911 Memorial
   - Daniel Libeskind | The Jewish Museum
   - Peter Zumthor | Therme Vals

On September 11, tragedy happened unexpectedly. Buildings collapsed, people died and lost family and friends in a moment. From then, the land can no longer remain an objective property. The land holds the tragic story and it is now the place where people have to remember the victims. So, this place became a memorial that is not able to come from objectified facts but from collective memories of people related to the tragedy.

In the context of ordinary life, we might unexpectedly encounter this spiritual space. Even though we are not directly related to the memorial, we might strongly feel sorrow around the 911 memorial.

As you walk across the faces, I felt a chill within me. I kept thinking these represent people, and I am walking upon their memory. The place was an interesting way to represent the memory for these people; a very simple, tangible representation for something as intangible as experiences.19

The space aims to make people have empathy through bodily senses. Narrowness and darkness create tension. And then he put metaphoric things, lots of metal faces, on the floor so that people cannot but make jangling sound when they walk through it. The sound would resonate between cold walls, and the mood is enough to make people fearfully chilled.

The contrast of characteristics such as water vs stone, fluidity vs solidity, reflection vs matt, and blurred edge vs sharp edge makes this space dramatic and cinematic. Moods are condensed in the limited space and our body is ‘thrown’ and goes through it by our eyes, ears, lips and skins. Our body is totally experiencing vivid moods.

Ma is the natural distance between two or more objects existing in a continuity or the space delineated by posts and screens. Sensing something invisible is an essence of Japanese art and culture; it also pervades various aspects of life and culture in Japan. In paintings, the emphasis was placed on negative space rather than positive space, rather than on shape, in music on silence rather than the notes and in dance on stillness rather than movement. This emphasis on absence can be expressed by a single term: Ma.

Ma can be defined in several ways depending on the context.

Rosemary Wright approaches Ma from the religious perspective:

Ma originates with the site where kami exist and, they exhibit a characteristic of movement that unifies the two concepts of space and time. The character of Ma shares some similarities with the concept of ‘negative space,’ as taught in western schools of art, but the western concept does not carry embedded associations with the spiritual. To keep this concept in mind in order to recognize it, as well as create it, is a joy because the presence of Ma in a garden, invisible as it is, offers the illusive ethos of a primordial ‘sacred space’ and is a distinguishing characteristic of the Japanese garden.

Arata Isozaki comments on the attempt to translate Ma into physical space:

This is consistent with our understanding of Shinto as a pantheistic religion. Isozaki explains how the ancient Japanese attempted to visualise and formalise the movement of the kami (spirits) through time and space. This act of waiting for the appearance of the kami is the underlying principle of the Japanese conception of space and time. In fact, the essential subject of many Japanese artistic pursuits is precisely the representation moment of inhabitation of a space by kami. Isozaki goes on to assert that in this framework, ‘space was recognised only through the mediation of time. This is a radical departure from the Western conception of the objective time-space paradigm.’

The word Ma does not describe the West’s recognition of time and space as different serializations. Rather, in Japan, both time and space have been measured in terms of intervals. According to Western notions, space is three-dimensional and a four-dimensional world results from the addition of the time element to the spatial dimensions. In Japanese thought, however, space is composed of strictly two-dimensional facets. Depth is created by a combination of two-dimensional facets. Time-scales (flows) measure the spaces between these facets. In other words, in Japan four-dimensional space is visualized as the result of combining two two-dimensional facets and two time-measurements. The basic reason for the use of the word Ma to express both time and space seems to be that the Japanese have understood spaces as an element formed by the interaction of facets and time.

Arata Isozaki

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Ma - Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   - Katsura Villa
   - Zen Garden

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   - Tadao Ando | Church on the Water, Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum
   - SANAA | Weekend House

3. International Architecture
   - Tod Williams Billie Tsien | Cranbrook Natatorium
   - Moon Viewing Platform | Productive Emptiness

Ma represents imperative emptiness to welcome kami in terms of religious philosophy. In other words, Ma space attempts to evoke the divine. Therefore, the geometry of void space is symbolically simple, and the volume of it stands out in general. Even in contemporary architecture adopting the Ma concept, the intent is that people would intuitively understand that this void space is meaningful in the overall scope of the building.

The Japanese Zen gardens traditionally placed in courtyards, is a good example of Ma. They act as connecting spaces, yet they carry with them the essence of the Zen meditation. What one learns in the theoretical aspect can be directly experienced in meaning. They are not physically accessible but are mentally accessible by the enlightened mind. Zen says, ‘Not founded upon words, by pointing directly into the mind. One sees the original nature to attain buddha-hood.

Richard B. Pilgrim explains Ma by analysing the linguistic aspect.

The character of Ma can be combined with other words to make compound words related to time and space, such as 人間 (nin gen): human being (Ma is read ‘gen’ here).

The compound nin gen refers to ‘persons (nin, hito) stand within, among, or in relationship to others. As such, the word Ma clearly begins to take on a relational meaning - a dynamic sense of standing in, with, among, or between’.

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Ma - Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   Katsura Villa
   Zen Garden

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   Tadao Ando | Church on the Water, Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum
   SANAA | Weekend House

3. International Architecture
   Tod Williams Billie Tsien | Cranbrook Natatorium

Isozaki speculates that the oldest form of the concept of Ma was the notion of Utsu (void). Utsu signifies the void inside a certain substance, a cave in a rocky mountain, the hollow inside of an old tree, the ‘dug-out’ of a canoe, or the cavity of a pit dwelling – the sacred spirit was thought to lodge in all of these voids. As the view toward the void became more ritualized, even a solid gem was believed to contain a void, a sack of cloth, without holes for hands and feet, was thought to be inhabited by the sacred God. The more severed from externality, the more sacred the internal void.

Ken Tadashi Oshima

Correlations between Ando’s space and Japanese haiku have often been made. Haiku is an extremely short verse from a highly normative character; it must contain a ‘season word.’ Using geometry, Ando likewise articulates the landscape into a phrase and generates another nature within nature. The shape of the sky and the shape of the pond correspond to one another.

Tadao Ando

Figure 3.25 Church on the Water

Figure 3.26 Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum

| Wonder |

Infinite spatial interaction

First Movement
Foreground: Void Background: Columns

Second Movement
Foreground: Columns Background: Void
Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   - Katsura Villa
   - Zen Garden

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   - Tadao Ando | Church on the Water, Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum
   - SANAA | Weekend House

3. International Architecture
   - Tod Williams Billie Tsien | Cranbrook Natatorium

The sensations that are experienced in the Natatorium are auditory experiences, deep echoes and smells of water, rather than visual. Having productive emptiness allows the building more airy rooms for sensory experiencing to occur. The omni-directional stimulations of sound, humidity, and dim light initiate daydreaming, thinking and meditation.

The general mood of the Natatorium is represented with oddness by the extremely large skylight. It is literally a void, but it is a critical architectural device that generates a mythical atmosphere. It is an especially vivid experience for the people in the pool since natural light and color filters in from the sky and plays off the ripples in the water, creating an enormous sense of wonder.

The materials of the Natatorium convey their material essence. For instance, when you get out of the pool and walk on the floor, you leave your footprint on the stony surface; the stones have a property of holding water for a while until they dry. In other words, the materials used in Natatorium mimic the human body’s ability to track time. The materials are constantly aging while humans keep having haptic experience. It is the way of nature.
Wabi-sabi

Origin

Broken down to its barest essence, Wabi-sabi is the Japanese art of finding beauty in imperfection and profundity in nature and the natural cycle of growth, decay, and death. Wabi-sabi is simple, slow, and uncluttered, and it reveres authenticity above all. It appreciates cracks and crevices and all the other marks that time, weather, and loving use leave behind. It reminds us that we are all but transient beings on this planet, that our bodies as well as the material world around us are in the process of returning to the dust from which we came.24

Wabi stems from the root ‘Wa’, which refers to harmony, peace, tranquility, and balance. Generally speaking, wabi had the original meaning of sad, desolate, and lonely, but poetically, it has come to mean simple, unmaterialistic, humble by choice, and in-tune with nature. A common phrase used in conjunction with wabi is “the joy of the little monk in his wind-torn robe.”

Sabi by itself means “the bloom of time.” It connotes natural progression—tarnish, hoariness, rust extinguished gloss of that which once sparkled. It is the understanding that beauty is fleeting. The word’s meaning has changed over time from its ancient definition, “to be desolate,” to the more neutral, “to grow old.” By the thirteenth century, sabi’s meaning had evolved into taking pleasure in things that were old and faded.25

Wabi-sabi is described as “an active aesthetical appreciation of poverty.”26 It is not merely poverty in the normal sense but in the more romantic sense of growing, aging, and contemplation on life and death.

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25 Ibid.
Wabi-sabi 侘寂

Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   Katsura Villa (Shokintei and New Goten)

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   Tadao Ando | Koshino House
   Kazuo Shinohara | House on Curved Road
   Kengo Kuma | Shizuka International Exhibition

3. International Architecture
   Louis Kahn | Yale Library
   Sigurd Lewerentz | St. Peter’s Church
   Peter Zumthor | Brøther Claus Field Chapel

| Materiality |

In the tea room the trunk, unfinished wattle windows, and general asymmetry of the component parts constituted a whole which could only be comprehended as “emblematic of life itself”27 and “mentally completing the incomplete”.28 This required not only incompleteness of form, but also active participation on the part of the observer. As Kakuzo Okakura elaborated, “the sympathetic communion of minds necessary for art appreciation must be based on mutual concession.”29

Kevin Nute comments on the relationship

29 Ibid., p 55.

| Value of Poverty |

of tea to man:

The relationship of tea to man is one that reflects not only physical poverty but also an emptiness or spiritual poverty. The art of the tea ceremony succeeds in achieving mindfulness through the spirit of harmony, reverence, purity and tranquility. Harmony is not only that of form but also of the gentle spirit, a gentleness of order, touch, light, and sound. 30

The tea room’s minimalist architecture, promotes high concentration, peace of mind, and calmness. It is reminiscent of the spirit of purity and simplicity.


| Presencing |

Wabi-sabi is not a decorating “style” but rather a mind-set. There’s no list of rules; we can’t hang crystals or move our beds and wait for peace to befall us. Creating a wabi-sabi home is the direct result of developing our wabigokoro, or wabi mind and heart: living modestly, learning to be satisfied with life as it can be once we strip away the unnecessary, living in the moment.31

Wabi-sabi

Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   - Katsura Villa (Shokintei and New Goten)

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   - Tadao Ando | Koshino House
   - Kengo Kuma | Chokkura Plaza,
   - Shizuoka International Exhibition

3. International Architecture
   - Louis Kahn | Yale Art Gallery
   - Sigurd Lewerentz | St. Peter’s Church
   - Peter Zumthor | Brother Claus Field Chapel

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The coarse surface of the concrete wall reveals itself under the casting light. Tadao Ando lets the concrete surface be what it is without excessive finishings such as sanding or polishing it. Therefore, the concrete would be able to make a new attribute as a material. It does not represent ‘coldness’ anymore in this house. It turned into having delicacy, softness, and even warmth.

According to Adrian Stokes’ description of the relationship between the body and materials:

Material interacts bodily, and it is deeply rooted in our memories with strong sense of tactility. The perfect sculpture needs your hand to communicate some pulse and warmth to reveal subtleties unnoticed by the eye; your hand enhances them. Used, carved stone, exposed to the weather, records on its concrete shape

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In this installation Kengo Kuma emphasizes the weakness of bamboo. By arranging the bamboo vertically, the weakness becomes emphasized. His insightful touch on materials creates a very delicate quality of spatiality.

As shown in Shizuoka International Exhibition, his works are evaluated mainly in terms of materiality:

His projects are based on profound understanding of materiality as a building material, the weakness or solidity of material, and using them in a refined way of fabrication. Also, He has successfully combined new and traditional elements to produce architecture that is completely modern while still being sensitively and carefully adjusted to its existing surroundings.

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Wabi-sabi 佗寂
Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   Katsura Villa (Shokintei and New Goten)

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   Tadao Ando | Koshino House
   Kengo Kuma | Oekakura Plaza,
   Shizuka International Exhibition

3. International Architecture
   Louis Kahn | Yale Art Gallery
   Sigurd Lewerentz | St. Peter’s Church
   Peter Zumthor | Brother Claus Field Chapel

Louis Kahn often used heavily textured brick and bare concrete, juxtaposed against more refined surfaces like glass windows and steel. The space is beautifully designed in terms of aesthetic as well as spatiality. His treatment of bricks and bare concrete elegantly generates a calm mood for the art gallery. The hollow concrete tetrahedral space-frame sets the rooms apart as gallery space while emphasizing the concrete’s 'lightness'.

“You must follow the laws of nature and use quantities of brick, methods of construction, and engineering. But in the end, when the building becomes part of living, it evokes unmeasurable qualities, and the spirit of its existence takes over.”

Louis Kahn

In attending to the raw, existential nature of his materials, Lewerentz privileges a subjective and shifting experience of the world. The severely reduced palette of materials has the same effect as a silent space, and we gain an enhanced awareness of the physical presence of the church, a presence upon which we can project meanings.

The general atmosphere of Lewerentz's church is humble besides the main mood, which is sacred. The extremely limited material range symbolizes commitment to a life of austerity before God. Meaning is amplified by his thoughtful configuration of materials turning into sincere hearts.

The value of materiality comes from sincerity. When an architect profoundly explores and respects the essence of material, it will have deep connection with spatiality, both human and worldly.

Figure 3.41 Yale Art Gallery
Louis Kahn

Figure 3.42 St. Peter’s Church
Sigurd Lewerentz

Figure 3.43 Brother Claus Field Chapel
Peter Zumthor

| Materiality |

34. OASE (Amsterdam, NL: January 1997) Issue 45/46, pp.88-95, Sigurd Lewerentz and a Material Basis for Form Adam Caruso

Mono no aware

Origin

Mono no aware is illustrated well in the Japanese literature. Basically, it refers “a beauty emergent in ephemera with a pang of sadness at the transience of life.” Sam Hamill translates the beauty of temporal things as the providence of nature, an “elegant sadness.” It could also be described as bitter-sweet.

The seventeenth century scholar and poet Motōri Norinaga described it as the part of the providence of nature. Responding to “Buddhist teachings that claimed there should be no sorrow for death’s transcendence,” Motōri concluded that “sorrow is an essential aspect of human existence.”

This emotional concept is deeply saturated in life, and is a dominant idea in religious and artistic culture in Japan. In visual arts, Mono no aware has been represented as the cherry blossom “in which the youthfulness of springtime blossoms remind viewers of the brief but beautiful times in life.” Since the blossoms end up falling off, their beauty becomes precious. So, the sentimental moment reacts to the phenomena of the world.

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39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
Mono no aware 物の哀れ

Architectural Precedents

1. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   Tadao Ando | Church on the Water
   Kengo Kuma | Great Bamboo Wall, Z58

2. International Architecture
   Carlo Scarpa | Tomba Briion-Vega
   Peter Zumthor | Art Museum of the Archdiocese of Cologne

As the congregation enters Ando’s church for worship, they are faced with an external space of nature toward the front which becomes a part of the church. The cross entirely floating on the water instantaneously triggers emotional sensitivity. Having enough margins around the cross gives a scenery view. The cross standing alone becomes apparently symbolic by enduring the bleak environment around it. A place to defend the eternal things among the ephemera of world will be remembered with all the appearance of a cross.

Bamboo is not considered as the material having the property of ‘permanence’ especially in terms of architectural structure. The weakness is a main discipline of Kuma’s Great Bamboo Wall. Bamboo shoots are positioned at intervals to create breezes and a floating structural system. So, there are ethereal and meditative atmospheres informed by subtle changes in the weather and landscape. By reacting to even subtle changes of the world, the architecture allows people to see many diverse facets of their surroundings.

The symbolism of water has a universal undertone of purity. Symbolically, it is often viewed as the source of life itself as we see evidence in countless creation myths in which life emerges from primordial waters. [...] The water is the epitomical symbol for metamorphosis and philosophical recycling.42

Since we have sensed that water is the origin of life and it is like a home, it is apparent that the water affects our emotions through the meaning itself and the reflection of it. It gives imaginary moments, and relatively nostalgic emotions when we see the water. So, what we feel on water is not only purity but also nostalgia, a longing.

Architectural Precedents

1. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   - Tadao Ando | Church on the Water
   - Kengo Kuma | Great Bamboo Wall, Z58

2. International Architecture
   - Carlo Scarpa | Tomba Brion-Vega
   - Peter Zumthor | Art Museum of the Archdiocese of Cologne

Carlo Scarpa

“The place for the dead is a garden... I wanted to show some ways in which you could approach death in a social and civic way; and further what meaning there was in death, in the ephemerality of life—other than these shoe-boxes.”

Carlo Scarpa

Peter Zumthor

“They [the Archdiocese] believe in the inner values of art, its ability to make us think and feel, its spiritual values. This project emerged from the inside out, and from the place.” Zumthor, consistently mindful of the use of the materials, and specifically their construction details, has used grey brick to unite the destroyed fragments of the site. These fragments include the remaining pieces of the Gothic church.

The large scale and subdued light of his space create a meditative, cathedral-like effect that sets the mood for other exhibition rooms. [...] Shadowy daylight penetrating the open brickwork of this lofty space is supplemented by judiciously placed overhead fixtures that spotlight the excavations. The ethereal effect is one of a wide variety stemming from different combinations of natural and artificial illumination in all parts of the building.

In this project, Zumthor’s material palette is judiciously selected in terms of shedding new light on ruins. By layering up with the fragments that are related to the site, time, and meanings of the Gothic church, the architecture successfully comes to presence itself in terms of the past and the present. Also, the debris becomes representative beauty and elements of ephemerality.


Ekaku Hakuin says, “a distinctive notion in Japanese aesthetic discourse is that of the ‘cut’ (kire) or, ‘cut-continuity’ (kire-tsuzuki). Basically, the ‘cut’ is representative in the Rinzai School of Zen Buddhism, especially as illustrated in the teachings of the Zen master, Hakuin (1686–1769). Hakuin insisted that “seeing into one’s own nature” can only be achieved if one has “cut off the root of life; You must be prepared to let go your hold when hanging from a sheer precipice, to die and return again to life.”

The ‘cut’ distinctively emerges from the Japanese art of flower arrangement, ikebana. Ikebana, contradictorylly, even though it results in their death, means making flowers live.

The essay by Nishitani Keiji describes ikebana as a practice:

Kire 屍れ

Origin


Ibid., pp 133-135.

Kire 切れ
Architectural Precedents

1. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
Tadao Ando | Church of the Light, Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

2. International Architecture
Le Corbusier | Church of Saint-Pierre, Firminy
SOM | Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale
Steven Holl | Cité de l’Océan et du Surf

| Incision |

Instead of hanging the cross, Tadao Ando carved it out of the concrete wall. This light coming through an incision in the shape of a cross on the altar wall is totally different from the usual meaning of light for practical daily life. When Tadao Ando cut off light from the original relationship of the world outside, it comes to acquire a different interpretation through the cross as an incision on a concrete wall. New interpretations of light can make people see mundane things differently, when thoughtfully manipulated by architect.

| Rearrangement |

Poetry is all about re-discovering different implication in words, re-arranging and re-conditioning them to create new meaning. Once the element is selected, the author lets it have new meanings of its own life. It should be detached from familiar/ordinary situations and thrown into a new context. From this point of view, it becomes clear that Tadao Ando’s architecture implies many poetic vocabularies. The thought on the stair is beyond its ordinary meaning in the Naoshima project. By cutting stairs off from familiar or functional contexts, the stairs obtain new meanings as a part of a façade.

Such things as light and wind only have meaning when they are introduced inside a house in a form cut off from the outside world. The isolated fragments of light and air suggest the entire natural world. The forms I have created have altered and acquired meaning through elementary nature (light and air) that give indications of the passage of time and the changing of the seasons.

Tadao Ando

Figure 3.54 Church of the Light
Tadao Ando

Figure 3.55 Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum
Tadao Ando

Figure 3.56 Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth
Tadao Ando
Architectural Precedents

1. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   Tadao Ando | Church of the Light, Naoshima
   Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

2. International Architecture
   Le Corbusier | Church of Saint-Pierre, Firminy
   SOM | Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale
   Steven Holl | Cité de l’Ocean et du Surf

Natural light floods in through light boxes and through a series of organized openings that are a direct reference to the constellation Orion. The light boxes are designed in a way that will bring light to the altar on specific religious holidays, like Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Corbusier uses the spirituality of geometry to create the overall form; a square base that projects upwards to a circle depicts the metamorphosis and transition from earthly to spiritual realm, and the cosmological basis is revealed in the constellation windows and angle of the roof towards the sun.

The power of implication appears through this architecture. The enormous word, or cosmos which is implicated in simple geometry, it gives room to imagine how wondrous the cosmos is, and it drives religious awe and respect.

The beauty of the library is enhanced by the large open plaza in which it is located. Visitors enter from the ground level into a glass-enclosed lobby that reveals the grand exhibition hall that holds the books.

The public can hardly access the preservation archive space of the Beinecke library in general. However, the reverse idea on the archiving of rare books by visually revealing them gives a new meaning to the archive program. By cutting off the ordinary root meaning of the archive and putting it into a different context, it provides it a new life.

The building form derives from the spatial concept “under the sky”/“under the sea”. A concave “under the sky” shape creates a central gathering plaza, open to sky and sea, with the horizon in the distance. The convex structural ceiling forms the “under the sea” exhibition spaces. This concept generates a unique profile and form for the building, and through its insertion and efficient site utilization, the project integrates seamlessly into the surrounding landscape.

A simple concave line implies all that the architect intends through the building. It is a symbolic gesture to express the earth and the sky, and it is implicative as well as intuitive.

Oku no Hosomichi 奥の細道

Origin

"Each day is a journey, and the journey itself home."

The first entry of Matsuo Basho’s masterpiece was written more than 300 years ago, *Oku no Hosomichi*, or Narrow Road to a Far Province. This diary describes his journey in general having poetic expression of each stop. Since he lived a chaotic life in a changing period of Japan, his travel was not merely driven by the joy of traveling, but also by his melancholy of intellect. Through travel and encountering new scenes, he would get the chances to have contemplation, and to seek an intrinsic depth of experience which could be not only universal but also immanent on every single life. The narrow road comes to unfold by its anticipatory, participatory layers along the road.

After his 1,200-mile travel route, thousands of people have made a pilgrimage to Basho’s trail to retrace his footsteps. People would commemorate the master writer Basho through the trail. However, it is more than a memorial ceremony for a Japanese master. Rather, it would be full of meaningful moments that remind each person of the value of life and bring new breath to live on.

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Should I hold it in my hand
It would melt in my burning tears.

Autumnal frost.

This autumn
Why am I aging so?
Flying towards the clouds, a bird

Another year is gone
A travel hat on my head,
Straw sandals on my feet.

Myriads of things past
Are brought to my mind
These cherry blossoms!

Spring rain conveyed under the trees
in drops.

A green willow,
dripping down into the mud,
at low tide.

Spring passes
and the birds cry out—
tears in the eyes of fishes.

Year’s end, all
corners of this
floating world, swept.

Stopped awhile
Inside a waterfall—
the summer begins.

Stillness! It penetrates
the very rocks—
the shrill chirping of cicadas.

Matsuo Basho
This pilgrimage route goes along the seacoast from Kitatani to Kumano Sanzan. The Ohechi was the route for those who undertook mountain ascetic practices called Okugake and the group of religious practitioners who repeated the Saigoku pilgrimage 33 times.23

Even though thousands of people have walked along the road, the spatiality of it is still available to accord uniqueness. The pride coming from the scarcity value of a walking experience on this road contributes to making people feel everything on this trip is valuable: the surrounding scenery and even one footprint.

The path leads to the sacred Shinto shrines. The anticipatory and participatory layers before arriving at the temple generate a threshold mood, and eventually the road becomes a part of the sequence to temple itself.

The layered space that creates spatial depth originated from Samurai culture. In order to emphasize the social status, Japanese people added spatial layers with fusuma that are "vertical rectangular panels which can slide from side to side to redefine spaces within a room, or act as doors."54

Thus, the depth made from this layering method presents a dignified mood, and it makes people curious about the end of the space.
Oku no Hosomichi 奥の細道

Architectural Precedents

1. Traditional Japanese Architecture
   - Ohechi
   - Ishiyamadera Path
   - Fusuma

2. Contemporary Japanese Architecture
   - Tadao Ando | Times Buildings, Rokko Housing, Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum

3. International Architecture
   - Steven Holl | Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Stretto House
   - David Chipperfield | Neues Museum

In the Times Buildings and the Mt. Rokko Housing, the connection between the buildings with vertical axes and the Oku (the horizontal panorama whether of the Takase River or the sea) happens through several continuous-discontinuous Ma (terraces). In Western terms, the Oku condition may be explained as the final give off toward a vague openness and depth of the landscape, through intense sequences which lead to a culmination. The feeling received through this contrast is synthesized and creates the art. 55

The open ramps are distinguishable from previous precedents in terms of spatiality. Sinuous ramps that fluidly move people through space have much more airy room so that the general atmosphere of the void space is gently sensed. It functions as transitional space by having a gradual sectional change.

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Oku no Hosomichi 奥の細道
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The sequential path is developed as an extension of the axis that comes from the urban context. It means a continuity of urban flow based on movements of pedestrians. The axis is the main architectural discipline affecting the general form, and the ramps are derived from this form. Before entering the ramps, the target-ed space at the end is slightly glimpsed so that it makes people curious and motivated to discover what lies ahead. It is an effective way of having people engage in architecture.

The ‘Stretto’ form enabled Steven Holl to divide the space in such a way that each part was important for the next. There is always transitional space existing between two different programmatic spaces. It makes it possible to have sequential experiences through each space of the house, and it seems there is a flow of one line through all the spaces. The Stretto House is significant for having narrative sequences through individually segmented spaces more than a continuous flow.


Chapter 4
Program Suggestion

Sensory Experiencing through Spatiality

Library of Rare Books
In terms of architectural identification, the reading space should be faded out at this point so that people can focus on books themselves and their sensations which introduce imagining, thinking and meditation.

The body would unconsciously respond to textures, smells, rustling sounds from rare books in the mood of an archiving space which is solemn and respectful. Now reading the book does not merely mean seeing it. We hear and smell the book.

Based on the research the project type is library of rare books. There is a great opportunity to apply the research in terms of sensory experiences through spatiality. The accessibility to the archive, the hapticity of rare books, and the intimate scale of reading spaces allow the proposed building to have architectural challenges of design for sensory experiences. The way of designing the mood for the ritual atmosphere, elegant sadness, and sensory experiences will be intensively considered for the proposed building design within the strategic thought of sequential narratives, materiality, and

Hapticity & Oddness

Intimacy

Program Suggestion

Library of Rare Books
Chapter 5

Site Analysis

Meditative Space in Urban Context

Downtown Los Angeles
Site Analysis

Downtown Los Angeles

General Statement

Most of the public space in downtown Los Angeles aims at encouraging social networks and supports show or art business. Therefore, the typology of public space as such supports highly activated moods, brightness all day long, absence of silence, and endless communication. The energy of the city evokes almost a frenzy of busyness. Even though the primary value of this city is having and making relationships as much as possible, Downtown Los Angeles needs a "breathing moment" where people can recharge their body and mind by themselves.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>General Statement</th>
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<td>There are eleven districts that are officially framed in Downtown Los Angeles. According to zoning, the upper west side was developed earlier than other areas, and many sites are rented at an affordable price. So, many galleries, art dealers, and artists have steadily been moving into Downtown areas taking advantage of the lower costs. A unique mood has been created in the area, based on the local artists; activities developed there.</td>
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The historic core district, the residence of local artists, is occupied by visitors during the daytime mainly at galleries, bookstores, and restaurants. So, it is hard to sense the presence of residences, though, because the district seems more like a part of the sightseeing areas. At night, this area buzzes significantly with an energy, since many people come out to get involved in social networking that is mostly based on the commercial value of art and show business.

The overwhelming frenzy in this area creates bodily and mental exhaustion. What Downtown Los Angeles needs is to have a place where the residents can have restful moments and recharge their body and mind through meditative experience.

Currently there are few qualified meditative spaces in Downtown Los Angeles. Those are all religious facilities and located on the edge of residential areas. Yet, it is hard to say that these spaces take place in their daily lives, since the sacred spaces are used for rituals on specific days, and require people to travel far from their home. I propose a restful space at the center of people’s everyday lives, where they can integrate meditative moments in their daily routines.
Typically, in the Downtown Los Angeles context, there are commercial programs on the ground floor, creating dynamic activities at the street level. Above the ground level, residential lofts mainly take over the rest of the building. This is a typical urban residential type, and it provides a high density urban condition.
Chapter 6

Design Proposal

Recovering Sensory Pleasure

Library of Rare Books
Design Proposal

Conceptual Conjecture

The site is in a noisy context at the heart of the city. The proposed building will be able to have a unique spatiality, when compared to the other contextual buildings, because it will be designed to create spatial depth through sequential experiencing. Each space would have unique characteristics, and they need to be placed in a sequence, so that the users would explore different types of spatiality, which are parts of a greater whole. So, every space should be considered a kind of transitional space and the motivation would cause movement of the user, therefore the sequential plan becomes important.

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Design Proposal

Study of Conceptual Mood

Two main considerations of the design are how to pull people from the street context, and keep them focusing on the library of rare books. So, the narrative sequential story becomes very important, guiding people through the flow of space. Eventually, they participate in their surroundings by experiencing bodily engagement in each programmed space and on the sequential circulation.

Therefore, the priority of the building design is to trigger bodily senses, engaging the visitors with the spaces through techniques of spatial compression and release, brightness and darkness, acoustic resonance and tactility of materials.

The following conceptual drawings suggest general characteristics of each space from the intent of mood-making. The final design process is developed based on this graphic study.

Figure 6.3 Threshold
Contextual Volume and Curiosity of Entrance

As a first step, the relationship between the site and the proposed building is considered. The site is located in a highly dense residential area, and the typical building is a ten-story structure that has commercial space on the ground level and residences above it. The volumetric approach from the view of the urban condition suggests the front of the building would be matching with others in terms of volume.

To make people motivated to enter the main program, the threshold should support it by having intuitively intriguing elements; a path, a row of columns, different brightness or a captivating feature.
Once the visitor enters the lobby, several different spatial articulations give a sense of directions for where to go. It depends on the choice of users, but they would follow an architectural sequence which is represented by each characteristic: the depth of space, brightness, solid/void and materiality. The proposed building orchestrates each characteristic to spark people’s architectural curiosity.

The first striking mood created in the library would be evoked by a grand stair. Followed by a dark and thick wall, people would climb, while watching the shiny glass box of preservation archive space on the other side of the wall. The spatiality through this place is all about its identity as a library of rare books. Also, this space is another threshold before entering the reading space and public archive.

On the top of the grand stair, the 2nd lobby unfolds. And from this level, you see the public archive presents itself as heavy, but also allowing for several breathing moments to emerge.

The transitional space appears by having a changing in spatiality, driven by materiality, sectional changes, and flexibility of function, meaning it could be a seating space as well as staircase. This space is defined by the spatial change that the body immediately experiences and perceives. Of course the other spaces are deeply related to bodily engagement, but the transitional space would be much more obvious.
The reading space would be a final destination of sequential flows. The sequence ultimately aims to get through programmatic/spatial layers, having people experience the phenomena of each space. And each layer will redefine the spaces so that people are pulled from the context and sequentially focused on the library itself.

The main idea of this space is to make the reading experience intimate, private, and cozy for a pleasant reading atmosphere. First of all, the spatial treatment in terms of size and form should be furniturized at the architectural level so that it turns into ‘nook’ for readers.
In general, the spatial sequence is not revealed all at once in the building. There is a motif, hint, or foreshadowing before people move into another space. People would glimpse those elements or spatiality along a sequence, and then they get motivated enough to explore the building.

Designing character and mood of the spaces is the priority for the project development. So, the geometry and the structural plan come from it to support and encourage experiential characteristics, mood and atmosphere.
A thick wall on the street side of the building sets it apart from the urban context. The commercial spaces are positioned between the street and the thick wall. Behind the thick wall, the entry path is defined by a row of columns, which acts as a transition. Behind the entry path, there is one more threshold condition. It is a ritualistic passage guiding people into a more 'reverent' space: the preservation archive space. The three planar layers, commercial, entry path, and ritual path, allow people to be pulled from the bustle of the street and begin to participate in the sensory experiences of the library of rare books.

The austere steel columns create a voluminous awe inspiring atrium, in which the main collection of books is located. The four story space provides an immense, quiet, light filled atmosphere in which to view the rare books collection.

The grand stair borders the void space, allowing people to sequentially access each level. In this way, people would visit the archive space, the reading room and the gallery, in that order.

The reading space is designed to respond to both the preservation archive space and the garden. It allows visitors to experience the past, represented by the preservation archive, and the present, represented by the garden, simultaneously.

The building's program is orchestrated in a sequence that allows people to engage in the spatial experiences in a proscribed manner. The jumping off point for the design of the spatial experiences for each space were a set of "descriptors" of key words that would describe the quality of a certain space (e.g. wonder, awe, ritual, and meditation). The aim of this approach was to imbue spaces with a powerful poetic character rather than simply define spatial qualities according to normative formalistic means. This approach is intended to allow for an enriched experience for visitors of the building.
Figure 6.14 Third Floor Plan

Figure 6.15 Fourth Floor Plan

Figure 6.16 Parti Diagram

Wabi-sabi
Aesthetical Appreciation of Poverty
Materiality
Hapticity
Acoustic Value

Shitai
Ritual Path
Controlled Light
Tension
Repeatability

Mono no aware
Beauty Emergent in Ephemera
‘Elegant Sadness’
Past and Present
Sudden Encountering

Oku no Hosomichi
Journey Path
Sequential Path
Practicality

Kire
Poetic Element
Dislocation
New Meanings

Ma
Productive Emptiness
Aura
Welcoming Space
Spiritual Void

Shitai
Ritual and Spiritual Atmosphere
Aura
Respectful and Reverent Wonder

Design Proposal
Design Development
The front elevation suggests that the building is one discrete volume. However, the five-story metal mesh screen, matching the heavy mass on the ground, adds a lightness composed to most other buildings in Downtown Los Angeles.

As a threshold, the entry path leads people deeper inside of the building. People walk along the thick wall guided by a row of wood columns. They do not clearly see the inside spaces of the library until they pass through a series of intertwining layers.

Right before entering the main space, there is a ritual passage into the preservation archive. It allows people to prepare for the different mind set of ‘experiencing’ rare books. Their mind becomes reverent, respectful, and meditative through this path.

From the street, people see the slit of the building. Since the view of both the garden on the rooftop and the darkness of the entry path present such a stark contrast from the immediate surroundings, it triggers curiosity as well as the ‘Shintai’ mood.
The main space of the library is the preservation archive. The spiritual and vast void space, containing a spiritual atmosphere for the rare books collection becomes the focal point of the library.

The transitional space is defined by varying levels of light, volume, and materiality. Thus, visitors intuitively know that they are moving into a different space by external stimuli: their bodies react to changes of the spatiality.

The grand stair is a significant feature of the library. It allows people to access each floor of the library while allowing great views of the building. The stair acts as a path which guides visitors through the sequence of spaces.

The reading space is defined by a pleasant reading atmosphere that is both intimate and private. The segmented spaces of the reading rooms generate the basic idea of architectural furniturizing. Also, a more tactile materiality characterizes this space for intimacy.
The main objective of the thesis was examining the current situation which is distanced from sensuous pleasure, and making a transition of phenomenological philosophy into architecture. As Merleau-Ponty’s commitment to find the way of “re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world” through bodily perception, architects are required to insightfully consider the relationship between humans and the world in order to vitalize essences of space as well as to find how we might meaningfully dwell in it; being-in-the-world as described by Heidegger, which means “there is no objectivity and no subjectivity. It is described as the process of letting things manifest themselves.”

In the realm of architecture, sensory experiences are amplified in ritual or sacred spaces since we emotionally respond to the space through sentiments like awe, wonder, or tranquility. Our senses have an ability to know the space before we even know what it looks like, which vision hardly does. Therefore, the study was concentrating on defining what embedded meanings are responsible for initiating bodily engagement and what architectural sensitivities are manipulated. Mainly, the current Japanese and international phenomenological architectures were analyzed through Japanese aesthetic and philosophical value, Shintai, Ma, Wabi-sabi, Mono no aware, Kire, and Oku no hosomichi.

Based on the research and analysis, the decision was made to work on the library of rare books in downtown Los Angeles. First of all, the architectural design is considered in the context. Since the site is in downtown Los Angeles, where there hardly is a calm mood, an essential part of designing the spatial depth is creating a meditative atmosphere. Thus, the narrative sequence becomes a main feature of the design, and creating spatial characteristics along with the sequence becomes indispensable in the design strategy. The proposed building unfolds the pleasure of bodily engagement through spatial experience concretized by sequence, spatiality, materiality, light and mood, for people to have mindfulness in meditative moments.

57 Merleau-Ponty 2002, p. vii
61 Ibid, p 225.


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