

Cultural Daily

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SPACINGS — Once upon a time, Architecture (1)

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, July 5th, 2017

Once upon a time ... in the time of the lean-to and the grotto, humans experienced the basic built space related *duality of interior and exterior*.

Associating that duality with basic *relational opposites of security and insecurity, instrumental and esthetic experience, social representation and cosmic symbolism, and with gender roles differentiation, humans* produced the embryo of formal Architecture!

These relational opposites still stand today in the architectural structuring of that duality, providing *a range of stimulating sensations, enriching perceptions and meaningful use-based experience*, subsumed in the notion of “Spacings”.

The feature image, reprised below, may well serve as an example of such spacing.



urban entrance

What was just an exterior building corner involving a change of ground levels and a passage to a gated alley became the *heart of a spatial pinwheel* with the addition of the four pseudo Egyptian columns, and the roof they support, *bringing meaningful articulation to both level and use changes*.

For one, it has a roof that extends into the side alley up to its gate, and, *for two*, it adds the sense of an *urban entry* to a set of architectural spaces adjoining the street.

As such it constitutes an exemple of what I call a “unitary built space” as the basic level of the architectural hierarchy of spatial complexity discussed next.

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The “unitary built space,” the “spatial sequence ensemble” and the “settlement ensemble.”

If the grotto and the lean-to can be construed as the first “found” naturally produced habitable space, *humans went on to establish “unitary built spaces” such as temples, meeting spaces or utility buildings, “spatial sequence ensembles” such as houses, compounds and palaces, and “settlement ensembles” such as the town, the village or the camp site*, as so many steps toward the birth and development of Architecture.

I became interested in tracing telling examples of these architectural types in the recently published compilations of current architecture authored by P. Jodidio under the title of ARCHITECTURE NOW. (See bibliographic note.)

Following is an example of unitary built space, sketched from photographs and accompanied by my comments regarding the sensations, perceptions and use based experiences I could read, or project, into its spatial composition.

The case of an Indoor Bath: a unitary built space

Ref. ARCHITECTURE NOW, vol. 4, pp.138-139



grotto reinvented

Nestled in a hillside, near the Danube and west of Vienna, with two blind glaze-finished concrete sides and two windowed and vertical louver covered ones, it is a singular space lit by strip lights along the ceiling corners that give the entire place a green hue reflected off the green concrete glazing.

Surrounded by a narrow walk, a pool covers the entire floor area but for a concrete vertical tube like structure that holds the roof and that harbors the changing room, across from a vanity counter with a sink and mirror set.

Not your usual swimming pool, nor baptismal font, it smacks of social ritual rather than personal health one given the presence of a wine cellar embeded in one of the back concrete walls.

Not a grotto for amateur speleologists, it is closer to a private mini Roman bath where politicians, or businessmen, can entertain and discuss business or state matters discretely, a temple of sort on the cool side of Austrian sensuality.

Photo and sketch credit Maurice Amiel

Bibliographic note:

Choay, F. and Bloch-Lainé, J-L.: *Espacements – Essai sur l'évolution de l'espace urbain en France*, Skira, 2004 (1969 first edition)

Greenbie, B. : *Spaces*, Yale University Press, 1981

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