

Sacred Space & Cultural Studies

studio

Bermudez / Campo Baeza

VAS

PROJECT 2 A NATURE OBSERVATORY

STARTS Wednesday 3 October
INTERIM R Wednesday 7 November @ 2:00-7:00PM (CROU 133 and 134)
FINAL Monday 10 December at 9:00am-5:00pm (MILLER) including Project 1

He is richest who is content with the least, for content is the wealth of nature.
Socrates

*And this, our life, exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in the running
brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.*
William Shakespeare

Nature always wears the colors of the spirit.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

DISCUSSION

Convents are places where ordained people voluntarily retreat themselves to serve, search for, and converse with God through contemplative practices of various kinds. Of course, monasteries and religious rituals are not the only paths leading us in our ageless pursuit for the divine. In fact, we don't need to go further than Nature to sense the presence, wisdom, transcendence of a superior force or being. Have you ever sat next to the ocean staring at the horizon? looked out into a vast valley between immense mountains? or just pierced into the silent night sky full of stars far from the city? It is no wonder that even non-believers find Nature a source of continuous awe, insight, and peaceful meditation.

Unfortunately, our busy lives and schedules replete with noises, pollution, people, vehicles, movement, artificial light and more makes us all too often miss even the most common miracle that constantly unfold around us: sunlight, rain, wind, cold air, flying birds, the clouds, and more. Yet, even from a purely selfish perspective, we now know that our very health and sense of wellbeing as well as our ability to heal are intrinsically tied to the restorative power of our natural environment. And there is more. In his essay "The Ethical Significance of Environmental Beauty", philosopher Karsten Harries tells us that in order to "*experience that aura of the real that gives to persons and things their proper weight ... today more than ever before we need beauty ... we need to open windows in the edifice of objectifying reason and its offspring technology.*" In other words, nature offers us the unmistakable chance to appreciate, enjoy, and in so doing

grow with and through beauty. In short, there is something quite sacred about nature even though our instrumentalist and consumer society wants us to see her only as a profitable source for raw materials, real state development, food, you name it.



BUILDING

A *Nature Observatory* is a place where we go to restore our relationship with nature and, in so doing, to remember and restore the very nature that lies within us. In so doing, there is the potential of a miracle: our reconnection with the largest environment possible: the cosmos... and for those of us believers, with God. The difficulty is to find manners to manifest, support, and induce the conditions that will allow people to engage Nature in such inspiring way. Education is surely involved but only if it involves a pedagogy that is more about pointing and enabling than sitting and listening to lectures. It is certainly more about establishing a hands-on contemplative interaction with the expressions of nature. Perhaps, the very term 'observatory' is wrong but it is up to us to find a substitute. Perhaps we should call it Nature 'temple' as our purpose is to produce in those visitors a glimpse of the ineffable in the rain drops kissing their faces.

Two things are clear, however. First is that our sensorium is the medium through which Nature presents herself to us. The more refined, conscious, and subtle our hearing, for instance, the more we'll appreciate and discover what nature is aurally revealing at one particular moment. Second, that the quality and characteristics of Nature's phenomena are central to the job. For this latter reason, you are to consider three aspects of nature in particular:

The Sky: Weather and Cosmos (Sun, Moon, Stars)

The Earth: River and Land

Cycles: seasons, floods, day-night

In short, the *Nature Observatory*, is an investigation of how natural processes may be turned (through architecture) into contemplative devices that advance, in a different manner, some of the same issues raised/addressed in the first project of the Semester. Whereas a convent's purpose is to get its inhabitants to focus on their interiority, a *Nature Observatory* depends on exterior focusing.



PROGRAM The *Nature Observatory* calls for two enclaves devoted to different yet complimentary purposes, each one following a version this general program:

- Reception and preparation area (1,000 sq.ft.)
- Observatory 1 (500 sq.ft.)
- Observatory 2 (500 sq.ft.)
- Observatory 3 (500 sq.ft.)
- Observatory 4 (500 sq.ft.)
- Nature 'Deambulatorium'
- Services (2,000 sq.ft.)
- Parking (5,000 sq.ft.)

It is expected that each team member will develop their *Nature Observatory* with a particular idea or ritual/practice in mind. Having a parti (or architectural position) will be essential to illuminate the interpretation, programming and development of the building. In other words, the given program is only indicative and not prescriptive (except in terms of scale). It will be up to each student individually and in coordination with their old teammate to adapt / change it to fulfil their unique view of the problem at hand.

The *Nature Observatory* (both parts) is to be located in the public area (existing parking lot) near the Convent you designed. Given its proximity and complementary nature, you will need to establish a conscious siting strategy that allows the three projects to co-exist and inform one another.

Please, become familiar with existing Nature Centers, Observatories, and Conservancies even though the one you are to design differs in significant ways from those that are in operation. See for example

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_nature_centers_in_the_United_States

- WORK** Project 2 will be done individually. The working format will be as follows. The *Nature Observatory* is composed of two 5,000 sq.ft. components that each member of the old two student teams will develop on their own. However, as said above, some level of coordination will be necessary so that the three architectural interventions (convent and 2 observatories) will work together. The end of the semester review will include all three.
- READINGS** In addition to the readings assigned in Phase One and Two, each person (of the old two student team) will select 2 of the following four readings (with the other person doing the remaining two):
 Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (Ballantine Books, 1985)
 Michael Benedikt, *For an Architecture of Reality* (Lumen Books 1992)
 Alberto Campo Baeza, *Principia Architectonica*, (Mairea, 2012)
 Rebecca Krinke, *Contemporary Landscapes of Contemplation* (# 1, Routledge 2005)
- ANALYSIS** Teams of two students will be given (through lottery) 6 precedents out the following artists/architects/works:
 Environmental artists James Turell (spec. skyspaces series and ‘Roden Crater’), Christo and Jeanne Claude, Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt (esp. ‘Sun Tunnels’), Jim Denevan, and Andy Goldworthy. Also see Sculptor Eduardo Chillida (esp. the ‘Comb of the Wind’), and photographer Adam Taylor (esp. ‘People in Landscapes’).
- In terms of architecture, review Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute, Campo Baeza’s “between Cathedral” project, the Pantheon, an Ancient Greek Temple, Yoshio Taniguchi’s Tokyo Sea Life Park, Snøhetta’s Wild Reindeer Centre Pavilion (Drove, Norway), Saunders Architecture (esp. lookouts, WC, and studios), and Li Xiaodong atelier (spec. the Water house),
- Your study should distill at least 6 design/architectural lessons to be considered in your design of the Nature Observatory. You will present your study listing first the lesson (1 sentence) and providing demonstrations of the claim by using the given precedents.
- You are expected to visit Dumbarton Oaks (<http://www.doaks.org/gardens>), a truly remarkable and beautiful garden/place that will inspire your imagination and design. The garden is open daily from 2-6pm (except Monday and Holidays). There is a \$5 admission fee with student ID.
- PROCESS** We will follow the same design process methodology used during the first project:
Week 1: Precedents Analysis (teams of 2) and Idea sketches (individual)
Week 2: Multiple design parties at 1/64”=1’
Week 3: Two Observatories + Reception/preparation (1/8”=1’)
Week 4: Remaining of the Program (1/8”=1’)
Week 5: Development and Presentation (1/8”=1’)
- GRADE** 30 % of the course grade