

The quieter you become, the more you can hear. Bara Dam Dass

Don't Think, but look! Ludwig Wittgenstein

Assignment 5 **Contemplative Architectural Experience**

10-minute Oral Presentation: Wednesday 31 March (group 1) and 7 April (group 2)
FTP upload due: Tue 30 March and 6 April at 5pm (respectively)

The intention of this assignment is to begin practicing *Contemplative Architectural Experience* (CAE). This means to step up and develop your level of sensitivity and attention towards the **presence** of architecture. Fully engaging this opportunity will require from you a *spirit of openness and experimentation*.

You have been given a particular place or building where to practice CAE. Please, don't get into an argument regarding whether or not you like what I have assigned to you. Just do it!

Below is a set of **strict guidelines** with procedures and attitudes that you will need to follow.

1

Assume that you will waste two precious hours of your life in this assignment. In other words, drop all expectations of getting anything out of it. At the same time, since you have accepted this loss, don't get upset about it or intend to change or improve anything that has not been given or asked from you. If you get bored, anxious, angry or begin thinking about anything, stop and just return to your initial resolution: you'll just do this because you promised it and/or it is required from you, period. Surrender yourself to this process.

2

Don't previsit the place before doing the assignment. Next time you go, you do the assignment. Select a special time of the day for the visit. I suggest you do it at dawn or dusk when light conditions and changes are most dramatic. However, if you feel your site would be best experienced at another time, please do it at that moment. Plan :

- to arrive to your site at least a full hour before sunset or sunrise.
- to stay 30 minutes after the sun has come up or gone down.
- to spend a total of 2 hours at your site.

3

Go alone without anything on you except comfortable clothing. Don't go hungry, don't go thirsty but don't go after dinner either. Dress up warm. You will take no notes or do anything except experiencing the place with your full body, mind, and heart. You will remain alone through the whole 2 hours. Avoid talking to anybody. Remain silent. Never, absolutely *never hurry*. Take your time. Remember your promise. There is nothing more important to do right now. Just this!

4

Use whatever mean of transportation to get to the vicinity of your place. However, make sure you are on your feet at least 100 yards away from your place (depending on the scale of the place, it maybe more). Once there, stop and become as aware of yourself walking towards the building as possible. Slow down your pace to about 1/3 your normal speed. As you slowly walk, begin to open up to the experience surrounding you. Notice your body, your breathing, your sensations. Notice the sky, the vegetation, the sounds of cars or people, the wind, the temperature, the aromas, your weight shifting from one leg to the other leg, how things move in your vision. Try to remain highly attentive of what is happening. If thoughts, memories, or worries come to your mind, don't engage them. Instead, just return to your awareness of slow walking and experiencing

5

Proceed to walk around the spaces comprising your building/site (inside and outside) at the same slow motion pace. Reduce your speed even more if you find anything that capture your attention, calls your senses, moves your feelings, excites you in any way. Stop if necessary and take in as much as you can. As you continue your journey, do what is both necessary and natural (trust your body). Feel the freedom of CAE. If for some reason you have a very powerful reaction right away while visiting a particular area, just stay there (and move to #6)

6

After half hour or so of free exploration, go to the area, place or spot that attracted you the most. This attraction should be visceral, intuitive, natural, spontaneous, and *NOT* intellectual. Then, find a location that is inviting, and offers you the best experiential opportunities as well as a place to sit comfortably. May be it's on the floor. Don't have preferences, just do what comes instinctively. Be aware that you will be sitting there for quite some time.

7

So sit down. Take a few breaths, move your back, neck, legs, arms and hands until you find a peaceful corporal sensation. As you do this, remind yourself that you are right here at this particular (unique) moment in time. Close your eyes and count following each breath exhalation until 10. Then, slowly, open your eyes. Try to relax while remaining highly alert. Be open to all the sensations and emotions that come your way. Again, if ideas, memories, thoughts, judgments, analysis, or worries come to your mind and distract you, don't get upset about it. Otherwise you will remove yourself from the experience. Instead, keep going back to your experience. And keep doing this no matter how many times things inside or outside your head get you away from the experience.

8

So, *just sit there, alone, still, relaxed, and in total silence* for at least 30 minutes. Ideally you should try to stay for 45 minutes. Don't lose your concentration. Observe deeply. Perceive the passage of time, the movement of light, the patterns of activity, the void of space but without

- analyzing anything;
- trying to make sense or understand anything; and/or
- critiquing anything.

Just be open to whatever is happening. Be there, that is enough. It's plenty!

9

Once the time is up, stand up and do a slow 10 minute walk around the same area where you were sitting. Walk even slower than before, at about 10-20% your normal speed. Remain alert, silent, open, relaxed.

10

After finishing your slow walking, close your eyes again and take a few last breaths. Then leave the place at your leisure. Remain silent at least for the next 10 minutes. Don't listen to the radio or engage in conversation during this time.

11

Immediately after returning, write, type, audio-tape your impressions of the experience you just had. Do this without trying to judge it but only reporting your sensations, feelings, thoughts as you had them. Whatever comes up is just fine. Don't try to smart. Be REAL, like the experience you just had. Be authentic. Record your impresions in a stream of consciousness type of writing. You may edit it once after you are fully done with it. This will be the product of this assignment and due for presentation.

Save this text in a DOC (or RTF) file called “your-last-name+exercise number” (e.g., Bermudez5.doc) and uploade it in the course G-DRIVE by Tuesday 30 March/6 April (5:00pm).

Grading

The weight of Assignment 5 is 13.33% of course grade.

618 - TRANSCENDING ARCHITETURE (SPRING 2021)

Exercise 5: Contemplative Architectural Experience #1

Building / Place	Student
Air Force Memorial (Arlington, VA)	McCarthy,Ian A
9-11 Pentagon Memorial (Arlington, VA)	Beiner,Andrew N
The Hirshhorn Museum (exterior)	Corbera,Lisbeth S
Union Station	Dziczkowski,Michael J
Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial	Johnson,Clare E
Monticello	Stack,Callaghan
Dulles Aiport	Laccetti,Isabella M
Kennedy Center Rooftop Deck / Kennedy Center -- The Reach by Steven Holl	Barkell,Keely E
Mount Vernon (Alexandria, VA)	Pioch,Mark A
West Wing of the National Gallery of Art (exterior)	Farinholt,Liam F
The National Cathedral (exterior) (and don't miss the nearby garden)	Kane,Liam R
Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle	Kazanci,Melissa M
The George Washington Masonic National Memorial (Alexandria) outdoor	Dreitlein,Michael T
World War I Memorial (District of Columbia War Memorial)	Kominiak,Tyler J
L'Enfant Plaza from Benjamin Banneker Park and whole Brutalist Context (following Independence Ave SW)	Tsiamis,Yianni A
The Library of Congress -- Main Building (exterior)	McCarthy,Elizabeth H
Apple Store @ Carnegie Library	Moore,Madison
Dahlgren Quadrangle and Chapel of the Sacred (Georgetown University)	Torres- Sejas,Adriana A E
The bridges of Rock Creek Park Taft, Mass. Ave., Q St., Calvert St.	Dende,Nicholas
Chicago/Milwaukee building	Chirinos,Cesar A
Los Angeles building	Bruno,Jessica A