

Architecture of Memories.

Assignment 5b - Final Research

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Introduction

The human experience has continued to evolve and change over the years as the architectural and urban manifestation of our built environment has also evolved and changed. Today, nearly 90% of our lives are spent indoors, with 54% of our population living in urban environments. The building has become an intrinsic part of the human experience and plays a crucial role in our physical and mental well being and health. The building, while a separate entity, forms our immediate environment, and becomes a central part of our sensory experience. It is this built environment upon which our lives and memories are built (Goldberger, 2009).

As we age our physical and mental needs change, and in tandem our interactions with our external environment changes. Due to advances in medical care and science over the past century our mortality rate has declined and has allowed people to live longer, healthier lives. The process of aging comes with certain needs and diseases that present new challenges for the aging population, as well as for the architectural forms that create their localized built environment. As we age our cognitive faculties and sensory abilities change, and we need to understand how the built environment impacts these changes.

In North America aging is often associated with the process of moving from an individual home environment to that of a long term care facility, where the physical health needs of the aging individual can be met, and where they can be supported by careworkers in their day to day lives. When one looks at Personal and Long Term Care facilities across Canada one typically sees an unremarkable institution marked by long double loaded corridors and antiseptic finishes. More akin to hospitals and hotels than homes, Personal and Long Term Care Facilities are designed for care as opposed to being for those that they house. The psychological impact of the conventional long term care facility environment on the aging population is rarely addressed, though there is a growing body of research that shows that the quality of life for the elderly in institutionalized environments is detrimental to their cognitive abilities and overall mortality rate. In these environments the space is divorced from the human experience, it is firstly an efficient medicalized space for the treatment of diseases of age, and only via the inclusions of beds does it become a residence. The conventional architectural manifestation of long term care facilities, their institutional presence and woeful resistance to creating an environment that responds to the human experience and the sensory needs of those who they house has decided implications on the well being of a resident. In the words of Juhani Pallasmaa "...nihilistic architecture disengages and isolates the body, and instead of attempting to reconstruct cultural order, it makes a reading of collective signification impossible". (Pallasmaa, 2005)

The architectural hegemony and systemization of long term care facilities denies its residents a space upon which they can be reminded of who they are, and the ideas that they respect. (de Botton, 2006). The blankness, and uniformity of the institutional building instead challenges our ability to connect and interact with the space around us, primarily because it does not create an emotional or cognitive response. It is not a space upon which we are able to build memories, encourage emotion, or rebalance ourselves. It is instead a slate that can be wiped clean at a moments notice, and into which a new resident can be put, while the memories of the past resident are whisked away in boxes.



Figure 1. Detroit. (Steven H. 2017)

"Architecture, as with all art, is fundamentally confronted with questions of human existence in space and time, it expresses and relates man's being in the world. Architecture is deeply engaged in the metaphysical questions of the self and the world, interiority and exteriority, time and duration, life and death." (Pallasmaa, 2006)

The Origin Story.

There was a singular moment in my architectural education and career where I truly stopped and said "that's what I want to do". It wasn't in relation to a building typology, or style, but rather to a feeling and a moment. I was flipping through a book of architectural images at my first summer at an architectural internship when a singular image caused me to pause. It was an image of Tadao Ando's church on the water, serene, calm and filled with emotion. I knew then that I wanted to create an architecture that inspired emotion and connection. Three years later I would encounter "The Eyes of the Skin" by Juhani Pallasmaa and the concept of phenomenology. The idea that our built environment and our senses are connected and create the complex experience by which we create our perceptions inspires me to understand how I can design better spaces and in tandem, better experiences.



Figure 2. Church on the Water, Tomamu, Hokkaido, Japan. (Tadao Ando Architect & Associates, 1988)

My interest in health care and architecture was piqued as each of my grandparents has faced declining health and ultimately the need for relocation to a long term care facility. None were housed in the same long term care facility, yet each facility was remarkably the same, muted, clinical and distant. Some had better amenities than others, pools, fireplaces, grand common areas, yet each felt temporary and unsatisfactory. As I've moved through my architectural education the disconnect between the sensory experiences and memories of my grandparents and the long term care facilities in which they were housed has become more prominent. I began to question the methodologies and ideologies behind the design of long term care facilities, and how we might be able to design better spaces and places for not only aging, but also for the residents themselves. The ideas behind the experiential nature of architecture began to coincide with the ideas of temporality and how the sensory experience can augment the designed environment.

The Question

Current Personal and Long Term Care facilities in Saskatchewan are heavily medicalized facilities in which the elderly are segregated and removed from their communities. With 15.3% of the current Canadian population over the age of 65 years, and another 21% of the current population between the ages of 45 and 65 years of age, the necessities of dealing with an aging population are becoming paramount. How do we move beyond medicalization and the architecture of institution to create an architecture that does more than house the aging population? How can the architecture of long term care facilities be instrumental in the making of place and memory?

We often view the idea of institution and spiritual connection as separate entities, relegated to different spaces and architectural forms. The ideas behind Juhani Pallasmaa's concepts of regionalism and phenomenology are important in redefining the idea of place, and the idea of institution. Architecture is a sensory experience, and a rare art form in that it is the only one to engage all of the senses. Architecture can strengthen the spiritual sense of self, as well as the sense of time and place. (Pallasmaa, 2006). Without the complete sensory engagement we can never fully engage with the environment around us, and without the sense of place and time we cannot be grounded in the present. (Pallasmaa, 2006). Life is inherently temporary and is marked by the changing tides of time, marked by inevitability of death. Until that final moment there is movement, change, sensations, transition, experience and emotion. Toyo Ito's sense of temporality and the movement of life in contradiction with the stability of geometric form and architecture (Ito, 1992) is analogous to the process of aging and the architecture within which we house the elderly.



Figure 3. Gravity. (Alexander Yakovlev, 2016)

By engaging the spiritual and sensory experience in design, can long term care facilities become an architecture of memories?

Research Methodologies

In order to understand and explore these ideas there are two methodologies which I may utilize in the process of this study. **Visual-Based Studies** and **Personal Writing**.

In order to understand the architecture of experience and memory it is important to explore the concepts and ideas in a number of ways. The exploration of form, materiality, expression, light, void, solid, and other experiential elements of architecture can be done via a combination of diagrams, photography, and other visual forms. (Borden, Reudi Ray. 2006).

In tandem with visual studies, personal writing will help me further explore the concepts in a supportive system that integrates the written word with the visual image. Each will support the other, thus furthering the exploration of the theoretical concepts and ideologies. I believe that both the written and the visual are important in architectural exploration and that they must be interwoven within a pattern, much like intarsia knitting.

A combination of visiting architecture, research and note taking will also be utilized as research techniques that support the exploratory methodologies. The best way to understand the experience and the sensory implications of architecture is to visit it yourself. To record your first impressions, your visceral reactions, and the senses which are augmented or ignored. How does this architecture make you feel? Are you relaxed or tense? Intrigued or bored? While visiting these buildings note taking, photography, sketching and other appropriate methods of documentation will be utilized in order to explore core ideas and theories.

Architectural Exploration

In order to further my understanding of the architectural concepts and their applications to the built form and environment I also intend to explore these elements in an architectural design process. While this design process may not result in a final building form on a particular site, I do wish to explore phenomenology and regionalism in response to the aging process and the prairie landscape. Thus, a series of vignettes that explore the different sensory experiences in architectural manifestations will be produced. These vignettes will attempt to explore and understand what elements are vital to the sensory experience. Which elements produce negative or positive experiences. Which elements create a sense of the local or vernacular. Which elements speak to the aging process, and which deny it or institutionalize it.



Figure 4. (Luke Pearson, n.d.)

Precedents:



Figure 4. UNESCO Meditation Space, Paris, France. (Tadao Ando Architect & Associates, 1994)

Tadao Ando is an architect whose combination of geometric simplicity, light and emotion create beautiful architectural experiences that invite sensory exploration. In visiting the seminar house for Vitra, I remember the way the light and shadows played on the concrete; how the concrete felt like silk to my fingertips; how the footsteps of myself and my classmates echoed in the interior; how the scent of the cool fall air followed us into the building itself. His architecture invokes emotion and immediately becomes a piece of your memory.



Figure 5. Sendai, Mediatheque, Sendai-shi, Japan (Toyo Ito & Associates, 2011)

Toyo Ito's concepts around the temporal and unstable nature of life in contradiction with the stability of the built form is connected with the ideas around the human experience. For Ito, it is first the human experience which defines place, and then it is architecture's job to become a vessel for which those experiences occur.

Precedents:

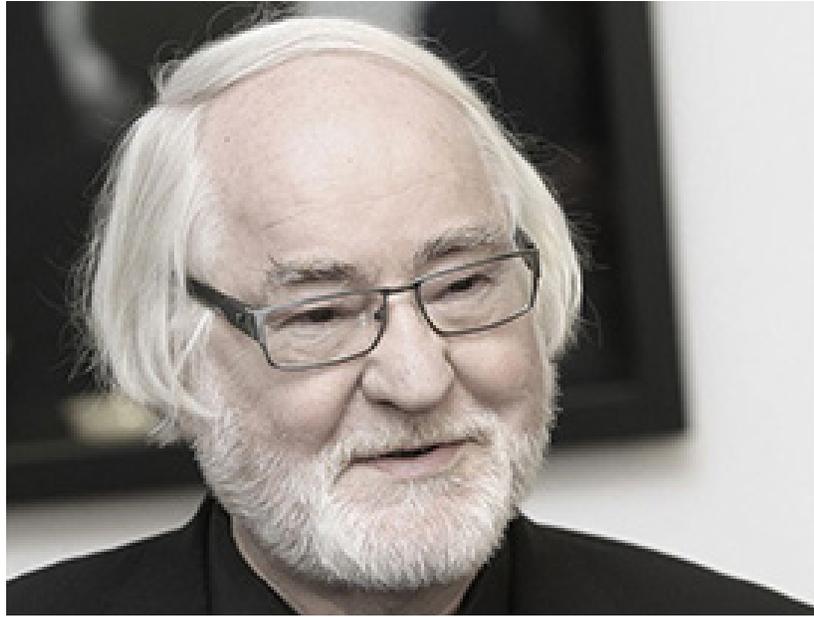


Figure 6. Juhani Pallasmaa. (Juhani Pallasmaa, n.d.)

Juhani Pallasmaa is a formative figure in the theories surrounding regionalism and phenomenology. His concepts surrounding the second modernism continue to be relevant in regards to the notions of local, materiality, and how these relate to the sensory experience of architecture. Pallasmaa argues for the need for architecture to be a whole art, one that responds to all the senses. "Architecture is our primary instrument in relating us with space and time, and giving these dimensions a human measure. It domesticates limitless space and endless time to be tolerated, inhabited and understood by humankind." (Pallasmaa, 2006)



Figure 7. Audain Art Museum, Whistler, Blackcomb, British Columbia (Patkau Architects, 2016)

Patkau Architects is an architecture firm that is firmly rooted in the ideas of place and materiality. Their architecture is inspired by the traditions and landscape of British Columbia, and speaks to the local vernacular in a modern and inventive way. They continue to explore different regions, vernaculars and landscapes in their work across Canada.

Precedents:



Figure 8. Siltan Chapel, Siltan, Saskatchewan (Wiens, 1969)

Clifford Wiens is an architect who sought to explore architecture in response to the landscape and local tendencies of the prairies. He has produced modern architectural forms, but ones that integrated themselves and spoke to the context and landscape surrounding them. There is an intrinsic connection between nature and architecture. The Siltan Chapel is an extraordinary example of the complete sensory experience in architectural form, there is a sense of peace, calm and reverence, which is elevated by the smells and sounds of the prairies.



Figure 9. First Nation's University, Regina, Saskatchewan (Cardinal, 2003)

Douglas Cardinal is another architect focussed on the architecture of the prairies, but from a First Nations perspective. Cardinal is largely seen as one of the first Canadian architects to develop a First Nations architecture, and particularly one that found it's presence in prairies. Cardinal is considered to be one of the "Prairie Expressionists", which also included Clifford Wiens, Etienne Gaboury, and Gordon Atkins.

Preliminary Sources:

Botton, A. (2006). *The Architecture of Happiness*. United States: Pantheon Books.

- Botton looks at the interplay between our environments and ourselves, and how one shapes and informs the other. "We depend on our surroundings obliquely to embody the moods and ideas we respect and then to remind us of them. We look to our buildings to hold us, like a kind of psychological mould, to a helpful vision of ourselves.

Flaman, B. (2013). *Architecture of Saskatchewan, A Visual Journey, 1930-2011*. Regina: CPRC Press.

- A compendium of modern and contemporary architecture in Saskatchewan. This book and others may help develop a sense of what Saskatchewan architecture has been, currently is, and what it may be in the future.

Furuyama, M. (2006). *Ando*. Germany: Taschen.

- This book is a compendium of Tadao Ando's works, his background and architectural styling and influences.

Goldberger, P. (2009). *Why Architecture Matters*. United States: Paul Goldberger.

- Goldberger works through the different architectural movements and how their response to place and time were elemental in the success or failure of the building itself. Goldberger is somewhat critical of the modernist and avant garde movements.

Oliver, P. (2003). *Dwellings: The Vernacular House World Wide*. London: Phaidon Press Limited.

- Paul Oliver was the chair at the School of Architecture at Oxford Brookes University. His primary interest and exploration in architecture is that of the vernacular dwelling. As we associate the vernacular and dwelling with comfort and a sense of place, it is important to understand the local and the architecture that is built without architects.

Mallgrave, H. Contandriopoulos, C. (2008). *Architectural Theory: Volume II An Anthology from 1871-2005*. United States: Blackwell Publishing.

- A compendium of architectural theories and ideologies. An excellent resource for other theorists and positions which may help support the phenomenological and regionalism arguments in regards to long term care.

Marquardt, G. (2011). Wayfinding for People with Dementia: The Role of Architectural Design. *Research*. 2. Retrieved From: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/>

- Specific article on architecture for dementia and how design can be beneficial for patients with Alzheimer's or other dementia ailments. Can we bridge the theoretical and sensory with the medical and institutional?

Fedderson, E. Ludtke, I. (2009). *Living for the Elderly: A Design Manual*. Switzerland: Birkhauser Verlag AG.

- (Full Text available online at: https://issuu.com/birkhauser.ch/docs/living_for_the_elderly)
- A number of case studies, specifically focussed on architectural design elements in long term care facilities. Is there an opportunity to bridge the theories of Pallasma and Ito, in combination with the regionalism of Saskatchewan, with the recommendations for designs for the aging populations as defined in this book.

Ito, T. (1992). Vortex and Current: On Architecture as Phenomenalism. *Architectural Design* 60. pp. 22-23.

- This article was studied in my Arch 420 Course and explores the connections between the temporal nature of life and the stability of the built world.

Preliminary Sources:

Minister of Public Works and Government Services. (1998) *Principles of the National Framework on Aging: A Policy Guide*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

- Outline study on what Canada hopes to achieve in terms of Personal and Long Term Care facilities, how do these guidelines connect with the sensory and regional. Do they connect at all, are our policies supporting new methodologies and the experiential.

Pallasmaa, J. (1988). Tradition and Modernity: The Feasibility of Regional Architecture in Post-Modern Society. *Architectural Review*. 188:1095. pp. 32-33.

- This article is Pallasmaa's exploration of regional architecture and the experiential nature of the local, materiality and natural processes of aging. He phrases this specifically as a response to what he terms "first modernism", and it's related, but distant cousin in "second modernism". Second modernism is Pallasmaa's interpretation of regionalism, and architectural evolution.

Pallasmaa, J. (1994). An Architecture of the Seven Senses. *a+u*. pp. 29,41.

- Pallasmaa's first exploration into the realm of the spiritual and experiential nature of architecture. These formative ideas can be further understood and realized in his later book "The Eyes of the Skin".

Pallasmaa, J. (2005). *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. England: John Wiley and Sons.

- One of the most influential books on my architectural career. Pallasmaa continues his argument from "An Architecture of the Seven Senses", in which he explores the experiential nature of architecture in regards to the human senses.

Statistics Canada (2016). *Canadian Demographics at a Glance. 2nd Edition*. Canada: Ministry of Industry. Retrieved From: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-003-x/91-003-x2014001-eng.pdf>

- Demographics information, to support and outline the context of the current aging population in Canada and Saskatchewan.

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Borden, I. Ruedi Ray, K. (2006). *The Dissertation: An Architecture Student's Handbook*. (2nd Ed.) New York, USA: Routledge.

Botton, A. (2006). *The Architecture of Happiness*. United States: Pantheon Books.

Brink, B. (2016). *Tadao Ando Meditation Space (UNESCO Paris)*. Retrieved From: <https://bbonthebrink.blogspot.ca/2012/09/tadao-ando-meditation-space-unesco-paris.html>

Canadian Architect. (2006). Looking Back: Silton Chapel. *Canadian Architect*. Retrieved From: <https://www.canadianarchitect.com/features/looking-back-silton-chapel/>

Douglas Cardinal Architect (2013). *First Nations University*. Retrieved From: <http://www.djcarchitect.com/work/#/first-nations-university/>

Furuyama, M. (2006). *Ando*. Germany: Taschen.

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Mallgrave, H. Contandriopoulos, C. (2008). *Architectural Theory: Volume II An Anthology from 1871-2005*. United States: Blackwell Publishing.

Nacasa. (2013). *Sendai Mediatheque*. Retrieved From: <https://www.metalocus.es/en/news/bio-toyo-ito-2013-pritzker-architecture-prizepatkau>

Pallasmaa, J. (2005). *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. England: John Wiley and Sons.

Pearson, L. (n.d.) Q&A: Architects' Sketchbooks. *Metropolis*. Retrieved From: <http://www.metropolismag.com/bookshelf/qa-architects-sketchbooks/>

Tadao Ando Architect and Associates (2017). Church on the Water (interior), Tomamu, Hokkaido, Japan, 1988. *The Pritzker Architecture Prize*. Retrieved From: <http://www.pritzkerprize.com/1995/works>

Unknown (2016). *Invisible Places: Sound, Urbanism and Sense of Place*. Retrieved From: <http://invisibleplaces.org>

Unknown (n.d.) *Audain Art Museum*. Retrieved From: <https://www.whistler.com/arts/audain-art-museum/>

Yakovlev, A. (2016). *Gravity*. Retrieved From: https://500px.com/photo/197232707/gravity-by-alexander-yakovlev?ctx_page=1&from=user&user_id=2556687