



.....Workshop given by Yael Reisner

*“Too often the problem with so called green architecture is the conflict between having a strong sense of mission and an admirable commitment to ecological design principles, versus an overly righteous moral posturing and a failure to convert a normal objectives into an equivalent artistic expression...**without art the whole idea of sustainability fails.** People will never want to keep an aesthetically inferior building around, no matter how well stocked it is with cutting edge thermal glass, photovoltaic cells, and zero emission carpet.” James Wines ,Green Architecture, Taschen, 2000, pp.8-9*

Good architecture or brilliant buildings tend to be judged by their capacity to produce an aesthetic experience, many architects often insist on removing themselves as personalities from the design process. This down-plays the direct relationship between personal judgment and visual discrimination, a position which has broader cultural implications.

In architecture, distrusting the eye (or the “I”) and the decline of the Self generally, led to the repression of spontaneous, intuitive thinking or any unruly imagination, as well as the repression of personal passions and personal judgement. All this, together with the rise of the utilitarian approach [emerging in the 1940s] or the parametric approach [from the 1990s to the present] architects deprived architecture in many cases from being a cultural register or being able to evoke emotions or introduce character.

It is an historical fact that when technical approach overtakes the design process - character is ridiculed. However this could be a failing factor in architecture itself since it is an outcome of an impure and complex set of activities that by its very nature has to be the result of a collaboration between many different pursuits. Juhani Pallasmaa¹ defined this beautifully in my conversation with him as he said that *“The discipline of architecture is ‘impure’ in the sense that it fuses utility and poetics, function and image, rationality and metaphysics, technology and art, economy and symbolization. Architecture is a muddle of irreconcilable things and categories.”* To create good architecture we have to keep its impurity. And just the same will apply to sustainable architecture.

Personal expression is a reflection of one’s culture and, eventually, a visual discrimination commenting on a broader, collective cultural spectrum. Collaborative design systems were always the architect’s methods of working, as we see in other fields such as film and play direction, in science, or in business and politics; they all depend on leadership and personality to add clarity and highlight significance.

One way to attain **cultural diversity in sustainable architecture and to develop authentic and unique local culture** is by nurturing and preserving its variety. Architects as creative personalities assimilate the various shades of their culture in their design work and the attitude to nature is a cultural one too. This approach will enable the uniqueness of each architect to develop and to express itself, and, through this, the character of the community or the society in which the architect works will also be manifested, since the individual does not live in a social-cultural vacuum.

As architects we have to insist on **the oneness of architecture and nature.** We must come back to the times when the wonder and beauty of nature were a constant reminder of wonderful possibilities - and as we enter the Ecological Age they have a greater relevance to architecture than ever before.

¹ J.Pallasmaa in a conversation with Yael Reisner as in my coming book: *Architecture and Beauty, Conversations with Architects about a Troubled Relationship.* Wiley, London, April 2010.

In 2010 the architectural discourse is **at a new beginning of a journey towards a sustainable architecture; conceptually, philosophically and artistically.** It won't be a fast journey since people will have to shift their 20th century psychological attitude that strived and aspired them to build up an autonomous world separated from the sun's control; an autonomous world of interiority.

The architects of early Modernism rarely ever considered issues such as environmental impact, or the related psychological effects of their work on the city dwellers and as a consequence of this many lost their contact with nature. The contemporary German philosopher **Peter Sloterdijk** claims that, "*Human beings never live outside of nature but always create a kind of existential space around themselves. **Urban spaces are a humanized environment where nature is completely replaced by a man-made reality. This can provoke an alienation; a sense of loss within cities that you might normally expect to feel in nature.***" frieze, the magazine of art and culture, issue Nov-Dec 2009.

Acoustic Twigs.....

In the coming workshop the task would be to design and build an acoustic canopy; an arch - about 2.5m wide, 0.75 m deep, and reaching the ceiling. That arch (made of twigs and wool) will define an interior spatial-depth; a depth-scape of interiority enhanced by sound.

*"Sound is a special sensory key to interiority...sight present surfaces...smell suggests presences or absences... taste – distinguishing what is agreeable or disagreeable...touch – helps form the concepts of exteriority and interiority... **Sound reveals the interior...**We can apprehend space in terms of sound and echoes...It is not spread out in front of us as a field of vision but diffuse around us. ...sound can be apprehend from any direction..."* Walter J. Ong, *The presence of the word*, New Haven and London, Yale University press, 1967. p. 2, p.117, p.118,p.163.

We will work as a group as well as in teams of two and four during these two afternoons.
We will use three materials to build our installation:

1. A mass of twigs - a volume of about 3m x 3m x 2m
Probably Birch trees' twigs or from other local deciduous trees.
2. Strong, thin fisherman's rope to tie up the twigs. [torn and shorter ones might be good for us.
3. Colourful wool threads, felt and textile for acting as an absorbent treatment to reduce reverberation and introduce jolly colours.

The twigs² will bring outdoor nature to affect our interior environment by their very presence in appearance and fragrance that might well trigger memories as well as induce good acoustics in the room and enhance its sense of interiority, cosiness and well being.

Give some thought on how to design the suggested canopy made of twigs and how to use the colourful wool / textile to increase the absorption thus reduce the reverberation in the given room and better the acoustics alongside the introduction of colour and texture. Drawings, collages, models would be discussed so as to arrive to conclusion and build up the installation.

Please bring scissors and other helping tools. Enthusiasm is key for success but getting to know how to tie knots to put the twigs together will help.

Yael Reisner Architecture BSc. AA Dipl. RIBA Part 2 PhD Reg. Arch. in Israel www.yaelreisner.com

² The reasons some trees are deciduous is because they grow in climates where it freezes. When the ground freezes- so does the water in the ground. Once the water in the ground freezes the trees cannot transpire. Transpiration is one of the processes that help trees to move water from the roots to the canopy. By stopping this process the trees can survive the winter and start growing in the spring. The best time to maintain deciduous trees is after their leave have fallen.They are less prone to pests and diseases as well it is easier to see the structure of the trees when it is bare and making it easier to prune. Removal of dead wood and excessive branching will allow maximum growth in the Spring.