

## Reconsidering Space /

*Shoshin<sup>1</sup> – in the beginner's mind there are many possibilities...*

The practice of architecture might essentially be understood as the organisation of disparate spaces into a complete, harmonious or unified whole - the creation of a spatial (or unified) field. Our conception of 'space' however (as both idea and entity) is continually changing and under constant re-evaluation. This constant change in our understanding of space holds a symbiotic relationship with change and growth in the technological field. I believe that we are currently in the midst of a creative renaissance, fueled (in part) by a technological revolution, which is providing rapid expansion in new media and information technologies. As we force ourselves to keep up with this growth, we are continually (consciously or subconsciously) redefining our understanding of spatial dimensions. This process has presently led us to a new dimension for consideration – the virtual field, which in turn has reshaped and redefined our perimeters in imagining further new spaces and aids us in their visualization and development. This shift, or expansion rather, in our understanding of spatial dimensions continues a long lineage of paradigmatic shifts, which have perennially punctuated the discourse on 'what space is'<sup>2</sup>. And what is space? The discourse continues; enter architecture.

Architecture might then be viewed as a means of translating thought into form. As a means of making sense of disparate, abstract systems and utilizing such information to create new patterns for design, creating new structures and living spaces. It is then a method of ordering chaos. My own personal interest in the practice of architecture has been informed by a deep desire to understand the way we live. How we interact with our environment, how we attempt to control and shape it to best suit our needs and to explore this concept of the 'ideal living space'.

This quest for a Utopian model city or indeed an ideal living system has long interested artists and architects / designers alike. Now, with new vocabularies in creative design and new methodologies for considering social behavior

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<sup>1</sup> **Shoshin** (\_\_, also pronounced **nyuanshin**) is a concept in Zen Buddhism meaning **Beginner's Mind**. It refers to having an attitude of openness, eagerness, and lack of preconceptions when studying a subject, even when studying at an advanced level, just as a beginner in that subject would. The term is especially used in the study of Zen Buddhism and Japanese martial arts. I think that it is an excellent attitude to begin a program of study with.

<sup>2</sup> The idea of an upheaval in understanding a shared idea or belief is far from new. Beginning with the primitive conjecture that the world was once flat, a series of misconceptions about the universe have, for short periods of time, been held as truths. Geocentric and Heliocentric models of the cosmos were duly replaced with more accurate descriptions of the world. Quantum physics currently provides us with an exponentially growing, expansive universe, which is perhaps an apt metaphor for our current relationship with spatial reckoning.

architecture is equipped to expand away from the mere formal arrangement of spaces and shapes and begin to explore the relationship between physical space and these social concerns as well as concepts of ideal living systems.

With this in mind, I aspire to a holistic approach to design: one that encompasses environmental concerns, moral and ethical issues, sustainable building efforts and values space as a platform for community and / or self-development. Architecture, as I see it, is now a responsibility. Responsible not only for how we relate and interact with our environment (on a micro or macro level) but also how we relate to one another as a people and a society. The creation of a 'unified spatial field' as I mentioned earlier is (possibly) the creation of this moralistic Utopia, a space for redevelopment and rejuvenation of what was once architecture's primary concern, to house the human soul.

I believe one of the key factors in the realization of this ideal is the production and preservation of green and blue spaces. In my local area I am lucky to be surrounded by much vegetation, trees, green playing fields and the expanse of the sea and it's shoreline<sup>3</sup>. These natural elements provide a vital source of connection with the natural world, which is often forgotten in urban or residential areas. Green and blue expanses allow the urban (and rural) occupant a space and time for reflection and contemplation, away from their busy scheduled lives. Continually, this is increasingly more important for any society and is one of the major concerns for architecture in the future. To arrive at a point where the aesthetics of our built environment naturally considers sustainability and thoughtful social planning.

April 2007

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<sup>3</sup> By 'blue spaces' I not only refer to the sea but also to the sky, which is now perhaps as valuable a commodity as land, in an over-developing country where tall buildings are set to take over much of our sky space.