

Urban Scale

One of the most important proportions in any work of architecture or urban architecture is the self-referential ratio of one distance to another distance or one size to another size, in other words scale. City elements and their size are in some scale ratio to the individual human being or to some activity (e.g. walking distance to a bus stop) of the individual human being. Even though these distances may not be readily discernable or may even be obfuscated by their large number and complex overlapping, they are still primary to how people perceive a city and must therefore be primary in how a city or parts of a city are designed. Distances between city elements are in scale ratios to the distances people can walk within given attention spans. Distances among city elements are also in scale ratios to the distances of visual recognition. Because of scale, people perceive outdoor spaces quite differently than indoor spaces. The importance of scale to our sense of place indicates that continuity of experience from one scale to another is an integral part of the sense of continuity of the urban fabric. Fractal City Theory achieves continuity through using a multi-scalar distribution of its key elements.



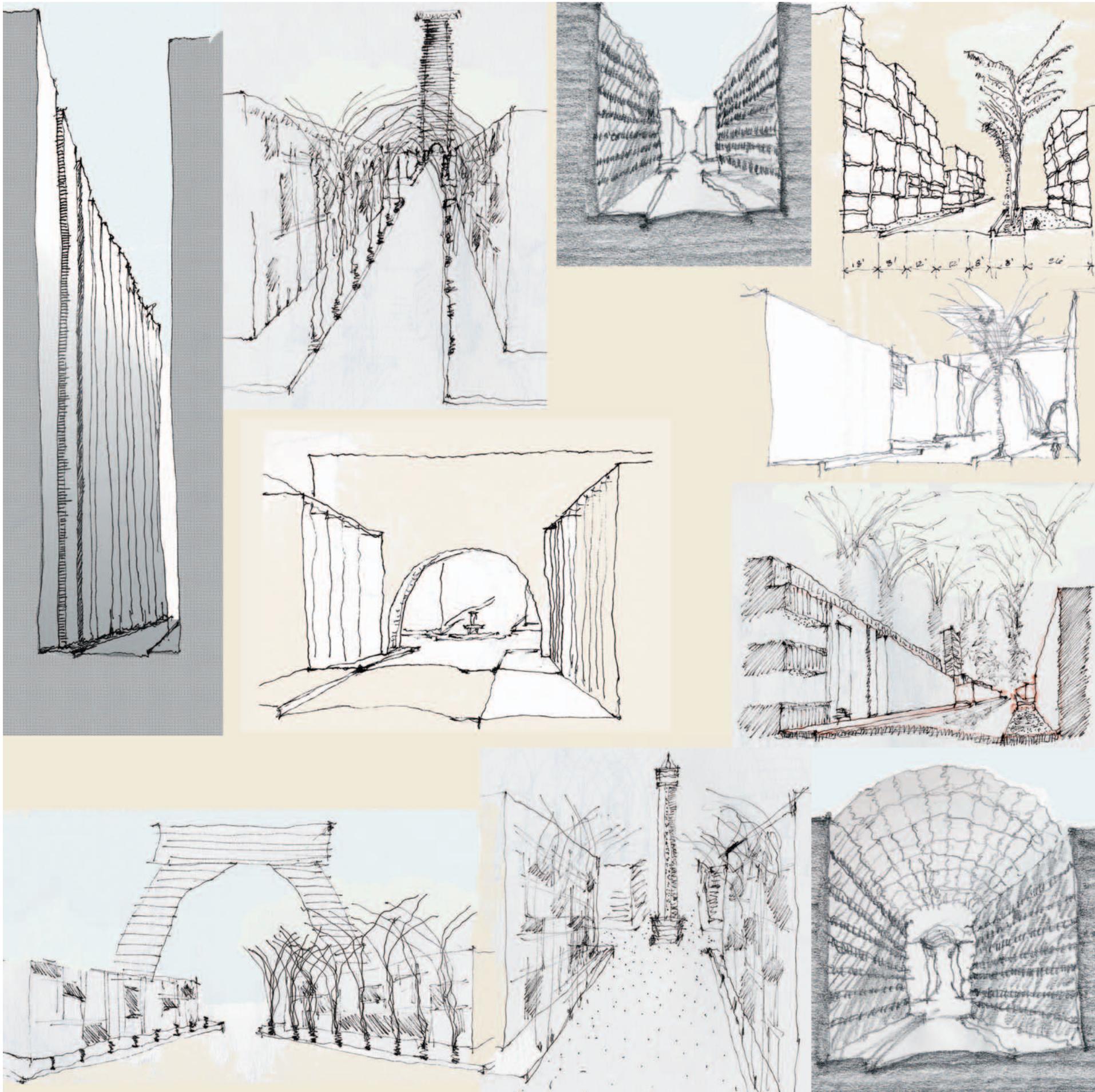
Streetscapes

Manifold pedestrian viewpoints grasp the experience of the city. City plans do not automatically create diverse urban vistas. The street dominates public experience in almost all modern cities. Public courtyards and piazza's with real vitality escape beyond the grasp of a society bound by the yoke of functionalism.

The cancer of suburban sprawl manifests the cancer of functionalism in current fads of urban architecture. The commodity of Vitruvius bears no resemblance to this pallid euphemism for pragmatism by which every possible banality of design and construction is granted acceptability under the banner of: "It works so it must be good." Likewise, every possible attempt at truth and beauty must survive the scourge of: "What does it do?" The escape from functionalism comes not by asking who holds banner or scourge but rather by learning of both who benefits at the expense of whom.

Modernism, post-modernism, etc. are best termed architectural fads or fashion. One key attribute of a truly new theory is that it subsumes previously acquired knowledge and experience in the field. So called theories of modernism and post-modernism discarded, trivialized or nullified what previous ages had learned. With few exceptions, these movements did not include, embrace or redefine (without destroying) previous architectural experience and knowledge. To obtain unearned authority for these movements, fashions, ideologies and fads adherents claimed their unsubstantiated beliefs to be theory.

Piazas can become valued public places in both modern cities and modern urban design theory when the value of living rises above function. and when the public itself is valued as a place of dwelling.



Multi-Scalarity

The determination of what city elements are primary varies according to the scale of consideration. These key elements include the city “walls” or blocks permitting very high buildings; protected green spaces along rivers and streams; parks; schools; and other public spaces. The heights of city-walls are defined by increasing the height limitations for walls as those walls enclose ever larger areas. The parks, schools and public areas are distributed at several different scales. The scales of consideration are:

- Street/Block: tree-lined sidewalks, yards with trees and planted median strips.
- Neighborhood: swimming pool, tennis court, community center, and small park.
- K-8 District: small school playing fields become after-hours public use parks.
- High School District: larger school playing fields become after-hours public use parks.
- Jr. College Center: larger school playing fields become after-hours public use parks.
- University Center: playing fields, campus squares, etc. are continuous-use commons.

