**A LANGUAGE OF TRANSITION
FROM EARTH TO SKY**

by

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Design thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
degree of

MASTER IN ARCHITECTURE

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September 1, 1995
Washington Alexandria Architecture Consortium
Alexandria, Virginia

FOUR HOUSES
by Kathryn E. Kruhm

The thesis of this project is to develop a language of architecture for the design of a rural house.

Parameters for this language are specified through program, ideas about living in a country home, and the importance of integrating the building with its site. The parameters are reaffirmed through the materials and elements of architecture.

In order to develop a cohesive language, four houses have been designed for four different sites. Each house implements the specified parameters in a manner appropriate to the setting of the surrounding landscape. The houses themselves become a transition between the inside and the outside and between the natural and the man-made. Thus this thesis is: Four Houses - A Language of Transition from Earth to Sky.

Our experience-space is necessarily in conflict with the space of nature. The space that nature offers us rises above the ground and is oriented entirely towards the earth's surface. The contrast between the mass of the earth below and the space of the air above, which meet at the surface of the earth, is the primary datum of this (experience) space.

Dom H. Van Der Laan, "Architectonic Space" (E.J. Brill, 1983), p. 5

There are many factors that have influenced and molded this thesis into what it is today. The ideas involved will continue to evolve even though the defense has occured and the documentation is complete. Architecture is an unending process which must culminate from every experience, memory and feeling in order to be successful.

Before I knew that I wanted to be an architect, I knew that I wanted to do something meaningful. This feeling was shaped by the unending support and encouragement of my family. The open minded, independent and thoughtful environment in which I was raised allowed me to choose a profession that aspires to infiltrate every aspect of life.

One aspect that directly influenced this thesis is a deep respect of nature and admiration of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Countless camping, canoeing and hiking trips has tied my soul to the expansive countryside. The resultant desire to create something worthy of existing within nature has driven me to this extensive study. At Virginia Tech I discovered an educational structure that allowed me to find my own way through this endeavor with the support of the faculty, other students and friends.

Working part time while preparing for the defense, Cooper Carry is an environment which has added another level of maturity to my career. The move into the profession has been a thrilling and rewarding experience.

I am indebted to all the faculty, friends, and family who took the time to listen, assist and push me to complete this degree of Master of Architecture.

There are valued times in almost everyone's experience when the world is perceived afresh: perhaps after a rain as the sun glistens on the streets and windows catch a departing cloud, or, alone, when one sees again the roundness of an apple. At these times our perceptions are not at all sentimental. They are, rather, matter of fact, neutral and undesiring - yet suffused with an unreasoned joy at the simple correspondence of appearance and reality, at the evident rightness of things as they are.
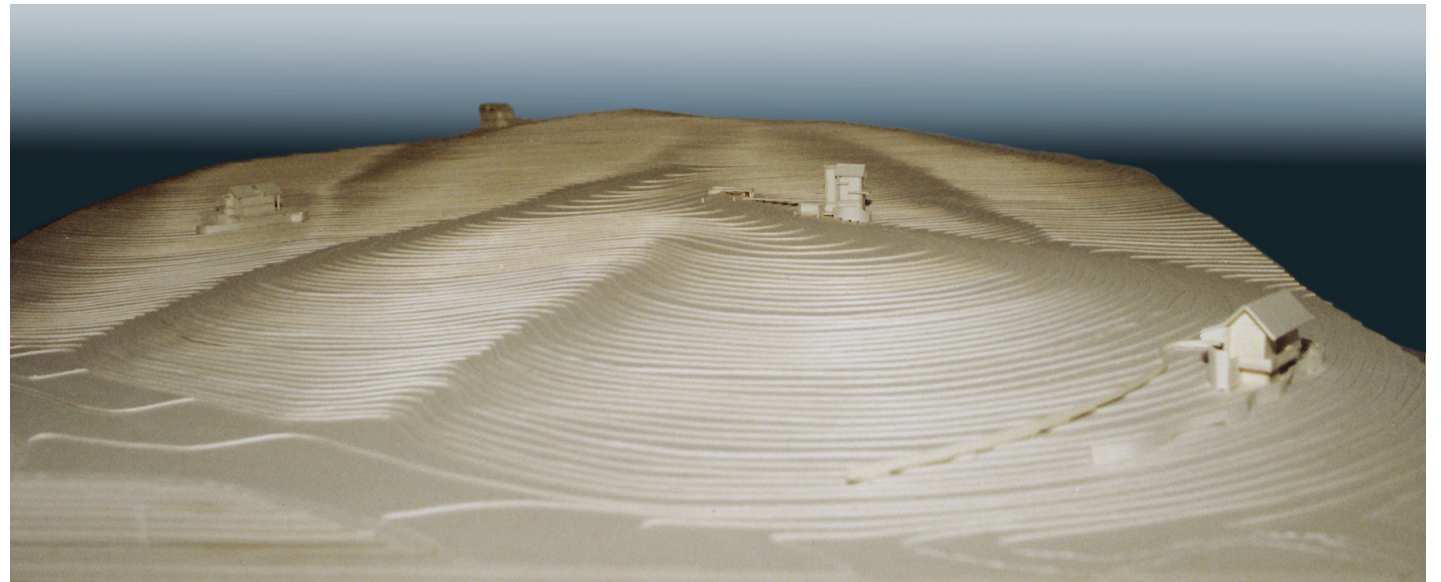
Michael Benedikt, "For An Architecture of Reality" (Lumen, Inc., 1987), p. 2

Thank you to my family for teaching me to recognize and enjoy the simple pleasures in life.

Thank you to the professors of Architecture at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in Blacksburg and the Washington Alexandria Architecture Consortium for teaching me to appreciate the struggles.

...the artificially separated space (of the house) must be created in accordance with the demands of the natural environment and of our own constitution...there is always a functional relation between four terms: nature, material, house and man. The materials are drawn from nature, the house is put together out of materials and man inhabits the house.

Dom H. Van Der Laan, "Architectonic Space" (E.J. Brill, 1983), pp. 2-3