THE SYNTAX OF BUILDINGS: THREE SYSTEMS; THREE SCALES

by

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INTRODUCTION

On the following pages are three buildings which may seem disjoint visually or symbolic; yet in my approach to and particular concern for each design and its scale there is a common link. At the end of five years of architectural education, I did not feel that I had as yet designed a building. I had hinted at designs and used virtually every method of reaching a building design suggested by my teachers but I had never started and followed all the way through with a building. This was my task as a graduate student.

In my graduate work with buildings I finally understood building design as a synthesis that happens coherently; all at once in the designer's head and is not some path to follow, whereby the building is slowly and painfully added up. Having learned the languages and tools of architecture in my first years I think I was ready to be direct about architecture in my graduate year. No longer is a building just a plan or a section or a part. You can invent the building using these devices but then you have to make the real section and plan, simple planes cut through a complex object which changes in three dimensions. A study model, a drawing or a word are only representations for the designer and the user. Architecture is represented with the hand; yet comes alive in the mind. Aside from the many frustrations of designing, it has taken me years to realize this alone.
FIGURE
2. COLLEGE AVENUE ELEVATION OF V.P.I. PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING
FIGURE

Street Level Plan: Concourse and Open Air Stage and Seating
FIGURE 4. SOUTHWEST VIEW OF THEATRE WALL
FIGURE 5.
TOP: West Elevation  MIDDLE: Section Main Hall Stairs  BOTTOM: North South Elevation
FIGURE 6. EAST VIEW OF CLASSES ON LEFT, HALL CENTER, AND CONCOURSE RIGHT
FIGURE 7. SECTION OF PARTS

ABOVE: PARTIAL ISOMETRIC, WEST END
FIGURE 8. TRUSS CONFIGURATIONS: PERFORMING ARTS BUILDING
FIGURE
10. COLLEGE AVENUE VIEW OF MAIN WALLS LESS OPEN CONCOURSE
On the previous pages, my major project; The Performing Arts Center for V.P. I.; is a proposal for the "language" of such a building and not the specific end product building. I feel this proposal gives the university a building format for such a facility. Again, the walls that step back, the truss and their spacing, the vaults, and the open concourse are something to generate excitement and involvement in the performing art's students and facility.
FIGURE 12. SOUTH ELEVATION: RADFORD PAVILLON FOR THE ARTS
FIGURE
13. GROUND PLAN: RADFORD ARTS PAVILLION
FIGURE 14. VIEW OF ROOFS AND COURTS: ARTS PAVILLION
FIGURE

15. SECTION ELEVATION ACROSS OPEN AND CLOSED BAYS: RADFORD PAVILLION
FIGURE 16.

ABOVE: VIEW CUT THROUGH SOUTH EXTENDING STAIRS  SECOND FL. SOUTHERN EXPOSED BEDROOMS  OPPOSITE STUDIO
FIGURE 17.
GROUND LEVEL PLAN, PERPENDICULAR AND LONGITUDINAL SECTIONS
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(ABSTRACT)

During the course of my graduate year of studies, many avenues of design were explored. The three projects shown in this thesis are the conclusion of this year. My primary concern had been to achieve a confidence with building elements as they operate together. As can be seen from the presentation, I did not arrange spaces but instead designed an ordered system of columns, walls and beams, that arose from a general program and could subsequently be manipulated to provide for the unique requirements of a particular building. These are not really systems buildings, or warehouses to handle any function needed; but instead a set of basic statements arising from the general activities of performing constructing and living. These general categories were chosen from local design projects. Specifically, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University is in need of a new Fine Arts facility—Theatre, Dance and Music. My design provides a general building language for such a facility.

Radford College Art School was in need of an outdoor paint and sculpture area—a place to work and construct objects that would best be done outdoors. The design by Jaan Holt, which I participated in, gives the college a pavilion "language" capable of incrementally changing to provide for their specific needs.
Finally, I feel the public is in need of a better house. The house included is not the answer but an attempt to introduce new design information into the present "symbolics" of the American house.

The three projects combined are the result of an attempt to understand specific building languages at several scales and provide an academic end point, as well as a beginning, to professional design.