Architecture as Connector to Nature

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Virginia Polytech Institute and State University

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Architecture as Connector to Nature
by Devon Tomaselli

Thesis submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture

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Keywords:
Architecture, Daylighting, Gallery, Conservatory, Nature
“Children can now recognize greater than a thousand corporate logos, but fewer than ten plants native to their region.” -Scott D. Sampson
How can architecture connect us to our environments?

Is architecture responsible for connecting its user to their surrounding context? Can our spaces inform us about the world around us? There are numerous ways that humans can feel a connection to nature. But, what ways are more universal than others? What aspects of the natural world cross geographical and cultural boundaries? Perhaps, architecture can connect us to our environments by revealing the universal passing of time through natural daylighting by way of structure, materiality, and texture.

As the primary instrument, daylighting will be used in this body of work to explore time on an hourly and seasonal basis. It will do this by housing two light-sensitive programs, a painting conservatory and gallery space. By pairing these programs together, the architecture will investigate time by comparing and contrasting two user types and their corresponding needs from each program.

Finally, by setting the architecture in the center of a urban block, the thesis can draw upon this high contrast to reinforce the connections it has constructed and made between the user and the natural environment.
This work is dedicated to my family who has always ignited, inspired, and enhanced my work.

Mom, Dad, Ashley, Jon, and Charlotte, your endless support has allowed even my wildest dreams to become a reality.

This body of work is for you.
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*Architecture as Connector to Nature*  
iv.
“Until recently, the received precepts of modern curation practice favored the exclusive use of artificial light in all art galleries. It has perhaps been insufficiently recognized how the encapsulation tends to reduce the artwork to a commodity, since such an environment must conspire to render the work placeless...this is because the local light spectrum is never permitted to play across its surface: here, then, we see how the loss of aura also arises from a relatively static application of universal technology.” –Kenneth Frampton
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"A gallery is a place to suppress distraction" - John Pawson
“Architecture isn’t just about creating new buildings, sometimes it’s about returning what is already there.”

- John Pawson
Welcome to the District
Welcome to Shaw
Welcome to Blagden Alley
Architecture as Connector to Nature
“Bulldozing to flatten a site leads to placlessness”
-kenneth Frampton
Is architecture responsible for informing us about our surroundings?

In responding to our surroundings, what can we discover?

In responding to our surroundings, what can we reveal about "place?"
CONCEPT NO 1: JOINING TWO STRUCTURES
"A plethora of cultural and social codes reinforce the superiority of art over the everyday, of contemplation over distraction, of sight over the other sense. It appears that architecture is demeaned by its associate with distracion." - Jonathan Hill
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Gallery Atrium Concept
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Gallery Atrium Sketch
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INTRODUCING THE CURVE
WRAPPING LIGHT

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LIGHT EXTRUSIONS
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Architecture as Connector to Nature
The Curved North Wall

A view of the North Wall which houses majority of the conservatory’s work and embraces the exposed concrete structure as it reveals the passing of time.
Atrium Axis

A view of the conservatory as seen from the gallery atrium
Gallery Entry Wall

*The Gallery's Primary Entry Wall used to host the conservatory's work and funnel circulation*
Conservatory Diagnostics Lab

A view of the conservatory’s “office lab space”
Conservatory Wet Lab

*A view of the conservatory’s “working lab space”*
Northwest Atrium

A view of the gallery atrium where the westn aperture introduces a high contrast light
References


IMAGES

All work including: photographs, sketches, models, and drawings are the work of the author.
Thank You