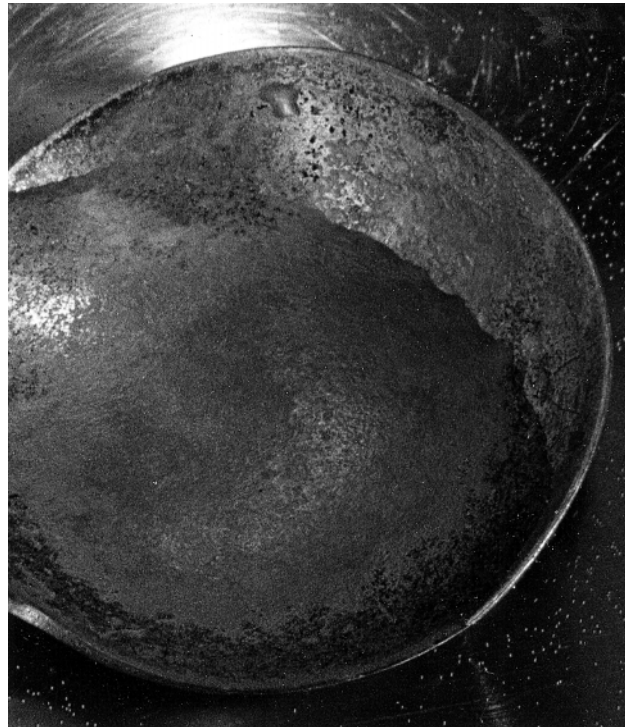
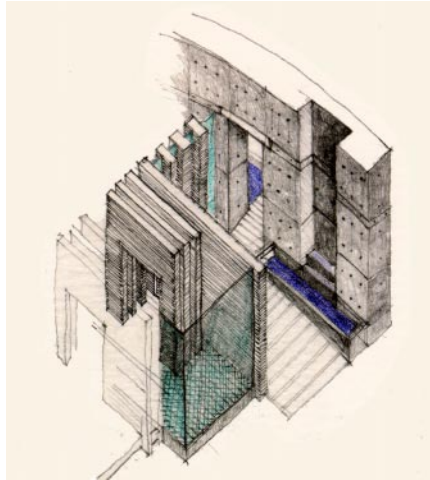


Place, Bound by a Circle

A Hospice



by Valerie Gaddis Purswell



**PLACE, BOUND BY A CIRCLE
A HOSPICE**

by Valerie Gaddis Purswell

*Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
**Master of
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Approved:

Michael O'Brien

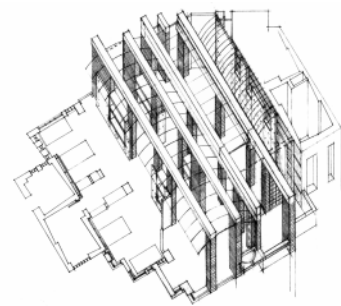
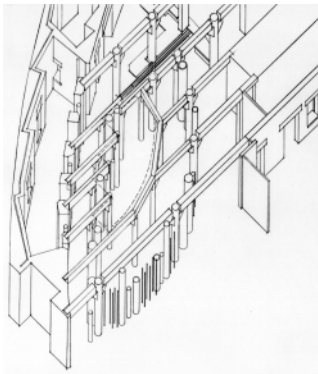
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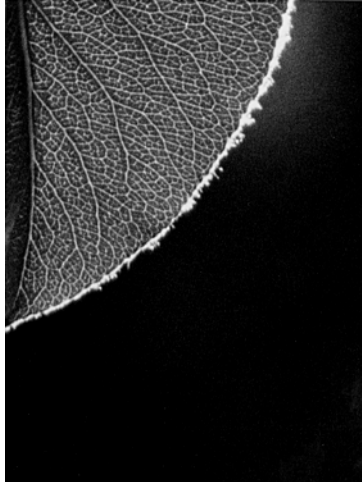
William Galloway

*July 1992
Blacksburg, Virginia*

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A HOSPICE

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Abstract

Death is a profoundly solitary moment in which one faces the meaning of one's existence. Death is an emotional, spiritual, psychological and physical act. For the terminally ill, the hospice is a viable alternative to dying in a hospital. The hospice can accommodate death being faced intimately amidst loved ones. This emerging institution places new and unique demands upon architecture. There arises a need for finding new forms for the Hospice. Solitude and fellowship have significant implications for these aspects of dying and triumph by simply dying well. Architecture can support such endeavors or defy them. In this thesis a hospice and a chapel are designed. Massive walls are carved out to form rooms, subtractive in nature. Series of walls are placed together, additive in nature, to form rooms. Geometric forms are studied for their qualities and are placed according to forged relationships.

Architecture, by its nature, puts forth a world-view of people. Architecture explicates belief, phenomena, and custom. In Structuralism myth, custom, and belief are examined. The elements found to be genuine are reconstructed into a continually refined, redefined and increasingly authentic architectural language. Ideas from the past are used but not as quotation. Architecture more attuned with its culture results. A building's meaning comes from its making, culture, syntax, and from the immutable qualities of humans. Meaning is discovered, not applied. Humans have a desire for things to make sense. Humans look for order and underlying invariance. They seek to reconcile the irreconcilable. Structuralist architects search for the order within various phenomena and dualities. The meaning intrinsic to a design is sought rather than applied.

Structuralist thought developed within several different disciplines; mathematics, psychology, literature, philosophy, linguistics and architecture. Anthropological Structuralism involves the discovery of the underlying structures found within and between cultures and the human mind. For example, myths of different cultures address similar underlying



questions even if they generate different answers. Linguistic Structuralism studies the role of language and the individual expression of language. Both of these disciplines have had a valuable affect upon architecture.

Themes are explored that include oppositions, and the in-between. Structuralism proposes a signification of place and occasion. Place that possesses particular articulations while retaining the capacity to be interpreted. Place endowed with great complexity that supports dwelling and passage. Whether you take advantage of the opportunities is not the issue, rather that a nurturing atmosphere is provided. Each element accommodates several things individually while supporting larger common stories. This can work at all scales be it a bench, a stairway or a window. The specificity and polyvalence of the rooms allows a diversity of use. The in-betweens are articulated as tangible elements that make sense. Moments within the architecture relate to each other as a series of places. Topology, the science of place, is relevant to this endeavor. Topology is not concerned with the size or accurate location of objects in space, but with their attributes or qualities. Finally, topology is the study of relation and invariance.

Anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss looked to native cultures to discover the immutable qualities of humans. He found that indigenous people are no less sophisticated than those of Western civilization. Their cultures are as complex in thought and behavior as “modern” cultures. A travel journal, found in appendix A, explores the Soninke, a Senegalese people and their building practices.



Dedication

*“For I can do everything with
the help of Christ who gives
me the strength I need.”*

Philippians 4:13



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