

MODULE TITLE: Cultural Context of Architecture I
Revision 0
MODULE CODE: ARC115B1
HAND OUT No: 1

Essential Reading:

Buy this if you can – No Alibis Book Store – 83 Botanic Avenue in Belfast

- **Addis B**, Building, Phaidon Press, 2007

Read this in the library when you get the chance – do not buy it

- **Tadgell C**, The East, Abingdon + New York, Routledge, 2008

The Addis is a well illustrated book on what is basically Western Architecture based in and around Europe. This means it will take you through from Greek and Roman to Medieval and Modern Architecture based mainly on building works as carried out for the Roman Empire and later Nation States including America.

Most students of architecture, of all ages, when they start to explore it expect that they will be finding out about building, however architecture is more than just building, it is part of a relationship between humanity and the world in which it is immersed. It obviously relates to the building of buildings but it has additional features that include the location of a building on the planet, the materials available from time to time and place to place, the skills of people involved and of people alive at the time, the needs and desires of those intending to occupy the built spaces when built as well as the necessary interest in value of both the building and also the work involved in organising building, what people sometimes call the added value of design. Whereas the building lends itself to what is often referred to as natural science the inclusion of the occupant and taxpaying public forces the student of architecture to ask questions about society and culture.

Such a grand statement may lead students to anticipate a particularly exotic outcome that is easily remembered and stored away as the cause of all these additional features but they will hope in vain for such a result. The practice of architecture is really one of elevating the day to day labours of making our environment through the transactional stages of interpersonal arrangements into the sublime realisation of what makes us tick, so to speak, because underwriting all of architecture is what underlies all of humanity, which is of course humanity itself.

A Guide to Perception

“The brain is neither a computer nor an artificial intelligence machine. It is an original biological structure, the product of the slow and astonishing work of evolution” ¹

When we ask what we can see and hear, a description of things, we must begin to ask if we can elaborate and perhaps articulate those things. When we look at buildings those of us who have been trained as architects can usually at the very least describe the way in which it is held up, give some idea of what materials it is made of and how they were put together. ~Some can even give costs although in the modern division of labour that is often the domain of the quantity surveyor and the serious structural knowledge is and was for some time with the engineer. The architect has moved from being an on site controller if that indeed was what he or she was, to an off site controller or interpreter of the various narratives and programs that go to make up not just the building but the interaction of the site on a number of other places, not all of which are spaces!

¹ Berthoz A, The Brain's Sense of Movement, Harvard University Press, 2000 p.261

To begin with we are going to pay some attention to the senses we have and what they look like inside the body, the eyes, the neurons in the brain and so on and we will begin to consider the concept of the management of consciousness in the way it links us to the symbiotic cosmology in which we are immersed all the time as it flows all around us in a complex and some may say chaotic manner.

