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Christopher Alexander
Center for Environmental Structure
2701 Shasta Road
Berkeley CA

Dear Mr. Alexander:

This is a long overdue note of thanks to you for your remarkable exhibit of Turkish carpets at the De Young. Even though the exhibit closed some months back I find it still exerts a powerful influence over me.

I am a writer and I was just starting a book (which Warner Books will bring out next year) when I wandered into the exhibit, not really expecting to get much out of it. After all I had been looking at carpets all my life without having any emotional response to them. But your carpets, coupled with the your insightful text, stimulated me in totally unexpected ways.

I went back to the De Young no less than six times, and each time I left with another chapter more clearly defined in my mind. In my book, sailing serves as a central metaphor for life (it's about how the lessons of sailing apply to the lessons of living), and without realizing it I was searching for the wholeness, the unity, the fine detail which your text and your carpets so eloquently illustrate.

On one visit I found myself copying down your words:

"I look at them every day and every day I learn something from them."

"I was not interested in the classification of carpets. I did not care if the carpets came from a certain area, or from a certain type, or from a certain period. I was only interested in the pieces which had the most to teach me in my own work as an artist."

"The animal being of the carpet hinges on color."

"Apprentice dyer required to make a color no one had ever seen before. Only then was he recognized as a master dyer."

"...but they have no soul because they have no fine structure at all."

At one point another visitor turned to me and said of your text:

"This guy sure is opinionated."

No, he's not opinionated," I said. "He just feels passionately about his art."

What surprised me was how my responses to the carpets grew and changed. On my last visit I picked out the specific carpets that elicited a strong response to me as the result of their color and structure:

.Small pattern Holbein carpet -- 15th century.

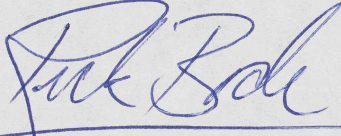
.Medallion carpet with endless Rumi design.

.White field bird carpet -- 16th century.

.Holbein carpet with arrowhead stars.

Candidly, several carpets were too complex for me to figure out at one sitting despite your valiant attempt to interpret them. My hope is that you will be able to reproduce the exhibit complete with text in a permanent home so that people like me can visit them every once in a while.

Sincerely,



Rick Bode