

Chris: So, now we're going to attempt to define the centering process. That's a hairy one.

Ramzi What was the history of it? How was it introduced? Like in terms of the process. Was it after the rules of the Game?

Artemis No it started with the ornaments.

Leslie I wasn't in the group that was doing the rules, but, I kept remembering your frustration, you kept coming up with these rules and Chris kept saying there must be some connection with the centering process.

Ramzi It wasn't that direct. It was more a realization that those rules, even if you apply them so what.

Chris There was actually an original intent from the very beginning of this project to make that process be a basis for this whole thing. But actually, I don't ever know if it was made explicit. In the first set of rules, the place where it came into its own most strongly was in this stuff about the yellow space. in other words, that the pedestrian space which the buildings helped to form had to be created. So that when you had to place a building you had to be doing more than just placing a building. You're actually responsible for the shape of some larger thing that's emerging. And that actually simple-minded version we actually wrote some rules along those lines that when you put down a building you are responsible for giving very coherent and definite shape to a particular part of the pedestrian space which is yellow, on all of our drawings. Then, more or less, I think what happened was what you said, that we kept getting more and more frustrated with the results because the real thing wasn't happening, and these rules were just not carrying it.

Ingrid It seems to me that there was one ~~point~~ point where it was getting a bit frustrating, what one needed to do was to try to take in the whole thing, and respond to it--provide what was needed. But you just had to perceive the whole thing, and this response would not only ~~xxxx~~ be something it itself, but also, create other sorts of things within

Ingrid this overall field. I mean to me that seems sort of an adequate explanation. I don't see it as all that complex sort of thing.

Chris The formal definition of the centering process the following thing is going on: each of these W's stands for a whole of some kind and this is the particular whole which you are engaged in making. I'm first going to state this very abstractly and then I'm going to give an example. At the time which you are making a particular whole, it might be a project, it might be a building, within the functions of the centering process you are simultaneously responsible for making three other wholes. There is a whole next to it, which you might call the negative space or the space next to what you are doing which has to be whole in itself; you are responsible for ~~being~~ contributing to some much larger whole of which this is a part; and you are responsible for at the same time making small wholes which are themselves clear and ~~are~~ coherent and possess their own internal symmetries and wholeness.

Now just take the situation of the evolution of the main square, where the water front goes like this, this hotel was already here and this grid is here like this. There was a street coming from the original gateways, and I'm going to discuss it the moment Artimis put her building over here. When she produced her building which had a courtyard here, and a theater here, there was the street coming along here, and then this newspaper building here. In terms of this scheme, she is producing first of all ^{the whole} which is this major courtyard on the one hand, secondly, in a very coherent and definite fashion, this street which ^{comes} goes along here is given its own wholeness as a space, and that is the second whole which is lateral. In other words at the same scale as this but next to it. At the same time, and this is critical of course, she is placing this in such a fashion ~~that~~ to begin to create that whole and that is being done very clearly, and that larger whole there is this 'W' up here.

Chris

and then at the same time of course she is creating certain details within this complex such as the thearte and its location in the courtyard and the arcade in the courtyard, and the entrance gateway, which are specific smaller wholes which are themselves integral and quite clearly shaped and contribute to the creation of that one. So each act has got all of those elements. Probably the one which is hardest to do it that one (pointing at the largest one), this is also fairly hard to do (~~xxx~~ pointing to the second one), so that the major lesson that had to be learned at each moment, was that as you introduce each project you have to simultaneously be creating a whole next to what you are doing, or maybe more than one, and most important of all you have to be contributing to the creation of some large whole. And that every single act no matter how tiny has got to be functioning like that. And that is actually where these larger structures get born because when every act is taking pains the function in this fashion, gradually you get introduced a ~~large~~ series of these larger structures which no particular individual is actually creating which get born in this manner. So that's the essence of what the centering process is all about.

Maybe we can have a discussion about the learning process which took place, because I believe it is true, if I review the history of what I believed happened, at the beginning making everyone aware that they had to be conscious and taking responsibility for these large wholes, that was not obvious, it was a struggle. And I think by the time we came to the end, it became more clear and ^{automatic} obvious and everybody was doing it. And so it might be worth talking a little bit about the experience of functioning at these different levels simultaneously.

It seems to me what distinguishes this from normal urban planning and normal conduct of urban design and development, is this very deep concentration each ~~person~~ person had to do ^{pay} while doing a project., to the capacity it had to create

Chris

some larger whole which ~~it~~ went considerably beyond the immediate thing that they were doing. And that was what made it sort of fascinating and beautiful. That was ultimately what gave the whole thing its structure.

I was just thinking that it would be very nice to go around the table and ask the same question as we did last time about the visions. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Give one example from the projects that you did where this business of making larger wholes and the lateral wholes was most definitely clear and you felt it ~~it~~ and it somehow nourished you.

Hajo

I want to emphasize one point very much, I always got the feeling that when there was a larger whole involved I got very excited. It didn't matter if it was my own project or the other's project. Somehow at least at these points I got very excited and I got very much involved at these points. I got not excited at the beginning or at Artemis' square because as this time I thought this business there behind the freeway, well I don't know, but afterwards, it started with the church and went on to the bath, went on to Artemis' ~~theatre~~ theatre, went on the Leslie's bandstand, and so on, And each time as an indicator that there was a lot of excitement not only for myself ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ I noticed that many people were really involved in these specific locations of what was going on. I remember at Artemis' point there were at least six people involved; at Leslie's bandstand there were other six people involved; and so on.

Artemis

You related the larger whole with the scale always, and I don't think that this was the case. Because you say when we were at the point of creating the larger whole ~~it~~ it was a lot of involvement, but this larger whole has nothing to do with the scale of the thing.

Hajo

I don't mean the scale because Leslie's bandstand is obviously a very....

Artimis But with the scale I mean that that it had to do with the major structures.

Hajo Yes, I talk about the major structures but not that it has to be a big thing.

Chris Artimis is saying something that actually ~~these~~ this sense of creating larger wholes ~~xxxxxx~~ sometimes these larger wholes themselves were quite modest and that also that's still very exciting.

~~Artimis~~

Ingrid Artimis, give an example of what you just said.

Artimis Maybe we can take this small park here, and see the completion of this street. I mean, we had been talking about this shopping street and then comes the park of Alice. Maybe you could say that it helped to create a larger whole, just, the end of that street and this is a very modest...

Chris It is fascinating this sense of excitement that comes from it--that when somebody does that suddenly that whole thing is charged. I want to talk about where that energy comes from. It comes from a very surprising place which is one of the features of the centering process and of these wholes which is really crucial has to do with symmetry. And its funny because symmetry in a certain sense is almost a taboo in modern architecture. because youre not supposed to create neo-classic, high symmetrical sort of things, so everyone thinks that symmetry is bad and assymetry is good. And as a total thing in fact this project is filled with assymetry because it is a very complex structure which is not at all symmetrical. But the centering process itself ~~tdx~~ relies very verylargely on the power of symmetry in the small to create these wholes. Its absolutely clear that the reason that street gets charged with energy ~~xxxxxx~~ by that little pier is because its symmetrical, in the small. Just that particular piece of symmetry suddenly creates a whole there in an otherwise relatively amorphouse situation.

chris And everybody feels it and is actually drawn towards it and starts to jump up and down. And its fascinating the way that works, I mean really important. ~~Andxxxx~~ And the same thing with Carsten's building in the square. You see its a symmetrical structure which gets its energy from its own symmetry. Its not even sitting in the square symmetrically, right. I mean the square is not symmetrical. And infact Carstens bath is sitting is sitting at an assymetrical angle with regard to the square as a whole. But the symmetry which is happening locally all the time is incredibly important and crucial in allowing this power to radiate from the parts.

Herman give an example which you felt this business of making ~~ix~~ larger wholes was strongest for you.

Herman

Actually, I think the library is one of ~~ix~~ the places and what comes to mind is when you told us once that when one enters the process one never knows at what point one is entering. You have an idea what level yet you have no idea how far this will go, ~~whxxxxxxx~~ you don't know how much of a whole you are becoming a part of. And I think that was clearest in the Library. Because I knew this whole area in here something had to happen and had to generate out from that square. Yet I had no idea what was going to happen there. But yet you try to respect things so that something can ~~xxxxx~~ happen. You have to try to be sensitive to it to try to let things grow.

Chris

There's actually a very complex thing that happened with the library. I'll put a diagram on the board

The point is that there was this little garden here with some trees, and this promenade and this was Hym Young's pavillion. And then Heman put his library here, and

Chris

if I'm interpreting correctly what you just said,
on the one hand you were beginning to create this whole:

but you were also deliberately creating some sense of
horseshoe, (by where you located your entrances) over there
and you had no idea what ^{sort of a whole} it was going to be.

Herman

It wasn't as if it were all thought out. It more or less
grew into being and that I think gave it a really nice
quality. Because I remember even putting that tree
in the courtyard there, that was like the finishing
touch.

Hajo

We were even talking about how these entrances relate
to this tree.