

and accept the fact that every time the result always comes out different. In our Amazon housing for the University of Oregon, a project for about 300 apartments, no two groups of buildings were the same, no two apartments were the same (see drawing and photograph on pages 336–37). Even in this infinitely repetitive problem — mass housing — the living process was of such a nature that each part became unique.

Everything hinges on the understanding that every part must become unique when living

processes are working. This is the key. It is a particular type of geometry which, though highly regular, has every part unique because it is true to its context and therefore to its essence. What we began to appreciate is that every repeated entity is different: that we have to look, carefully at every single case as fresh.

Making it, designing it, laying it out, is immensely hard work, harder than what we are used to — but it *works*. Indeed, finally we understand that this is the *only* thing which works.



5 / THE SURPRISING CHARACTER OF WHAT UNFOLDS

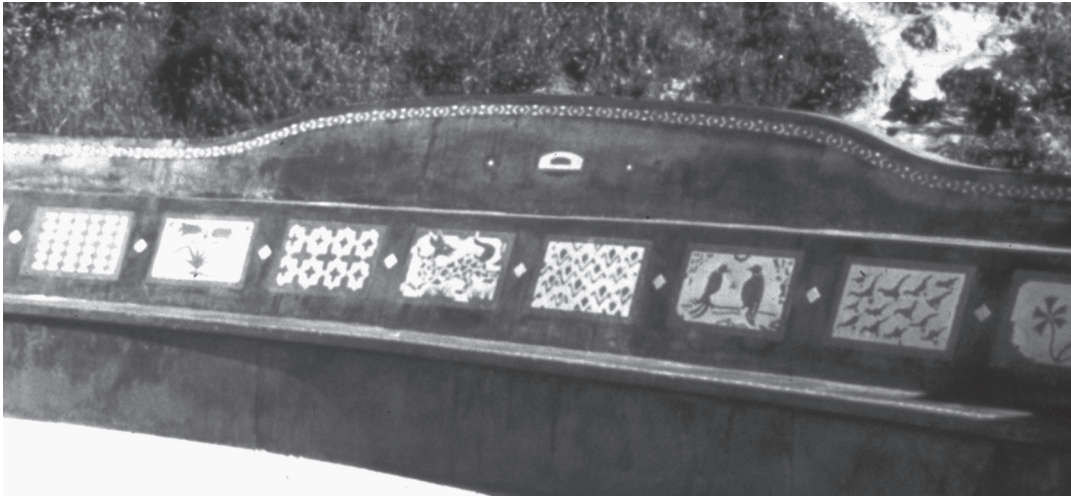


The many features of the Fort Mason bench, San Francisco. By making the bench reflect and extend the structure which is there, it takes on a unique character that emerges from that one place in the world.

Because of the uniqueness which unfolds, the results of living process will often be unexpected, even turn out surprising. This unexpectedness is typical of all structure-preserving transformations. Although the concept of structure-preserving transformations sounds conservative — to some people it may even sound as if you don't invent or create anything — in reality

the process is very different. By preserving structure one always gets surprising results.

Consider the case of the San Francisco bench (for details see Book 3, chapter 11). I began with a clear sketch of what I thought it ought to be — a rectangular U-shape. As we began working, the structure-preserving process then taught us something quite different. Using the



The bench from the front, showing details of the hand-made terrazzo panels designed and shaped and cast in place to fit the landscape and the place while we built the bench

structure-preserving process, first with concrete blocks, then with a group of people simulating their natural way of sitting in relation to the landscape and to one another, the initial rudimentary idea of the bench was slowly transformed into something entirely unexpected. The structure-preserving center-making process first generated a gentle curve (a GOOD SHAPE); then the ROUGHNESS of the ends of the curve to make POSITIVE SPACE with the surrounding pier; then BOUNDARIES in the structure; then a backbone shape for the back of the bench (GOOD SHAPE again, and STRONG CENTERS; then a stair on the back of the bench forming a special place; then an

unanticipated octagonal table with lobes (LOCAL SYMMETRIES); then ornaments of richness and variety with ALTERNATING REPETITION of green and white, with a curved line of black and white diamonds with LOCAL SYMMETRIES once again preserving and intensifying the larger structure of the curve. The deep structure of wholeness, being made of centers, is such that the work of enhancing and preserving that structure — although it sounds passive — *is more active than anything, more inventive than a mythical “wild” artistic imagination.* In fact it is the work of enhancing structure which gives rise to the most imaginative, inventive, and wonderful new creations.



6 / RESPECT FOR WHAT EXISTS

The creative work is to illuminate, to reveal what is already there . . . but this takes depth of perception and love . . . certainly profound knowledge of the nature of space and its structure. To do it, successfully, we are called upon to make another crucial revision in our views about the nature of things: We have always assumed that the process of creation is a process which somehow inserts entirely new structure into the

world . . . in the form of inventions, creations, and so on. Living process teaches us that wholeness is always formed by a special process in which new structure emerges directly out of existing structure, in a way which preserves the old structure, and therefore makes the new whole harmonious. Thus the process of making wholeness is not merely a process which forms centers or the field of centers in space . . . it is a process