



*Very subtle ornamental painted wall and floor, house in Sri Lanka. Geoffrey Bawa, c.1988.*

bands, flowers, animals . . . the elements that arise most naturally from the fifteen transformations. Ornament, when viewed with proper respect, summarizes everything about living structure within its laws. If we understand ornament properly, we understand the principles of living astructure, and we understand how to make —

in geometry — something which fully embodies living structure, that means the fifteen properties as they arise from the contingencies and accidents of a particular context, and thus enhance the structure of a particular larger configuration in the world. Ornament is not trivial. It is most profound, and covers *everything*.



10 / IN A LIVING BUILDING, EVERYTHING  
IS ULTIMATELY ORNAMENT

The principles that govern ornament, govern land, volume, and building structure. The very same principles, which have to do with positive space, alternating repetition, powerful centers forming and breaking out from the varying shimmering mass — all of them apply at every scale.

It must be understood that ornament is not something which is imposed to finish things off. It is, in itself, of the essence.

If we look at the gate, or the gymnasium, or the orchard, shown on pages 612-13, it is plain, first of all, that they are all very practical. The gate is well made, sturdy, gives access to the meadow, is light enough to push easily, has a nice fastener to prevent the sheep getting out. But *in addition* it is also beautiful. It has five bars evenly spaced. It has a cross made of two diagonals. It is almost exactly square. Of course



*An interior in India. The whole conception of this beautiful place is all ornament, all living ornament forming the space, creating the ambience; flowers from the hand of a person, making a meadow by the hand of human beings in a surrounding of mortar, plaster, marble, tile and wood. Is it any different from a bed where people may lie in the midst of a patch of lilies in the forest?*



*Left: A gate in the meadow fence. Even though it is the simplest and most utilitarian gate, it is—also—a lovely ornament that ornaments the fence, the tree, the meadow. Right: A model showing houses, trees, paths, walls, gardens, we laid out as part of a new town in an old pear orchard. New Ryde on the Sacramento River, 1992. In both cases, the functional beauty of the place, its capacity to have life, is due to the simultaneous presence of its “ornamental” character—actually, in this case, a way of more boldly introducing the fifteen properties into the transformations which generated the life of the plan.*

these features, too, are practical. But above all the gate is beautiful, and plays a vital role in the beauty of the garden and the meadow beyond.

It may be said, first, that this beauty formed by the geometric and ornamental character, is a necessary feature of what we do in the world. It is not something gratuitous, added to the practical nature of the world. It is something essential, which must be present, in everything, in order that it may heal the world, just as it is in nature.

That is true, also, for the orchard illustrated. It is a pear orchard on the bank of the Sacramento River. Like any orchard, the trees are evenly spaced. This is, in part of course, for practical reasons: to give light, to provide access, allow picking, allow vehicles to pass down the rows of trees, and so on. But in part, the ornament formed by the regularly repeating trees, is lovely, just because of its repetition. It is because

of this quality of regularity, coupled with the variety of individual trees, that we love orchards so much. When we introduced houses into the orchard, among the trees, as shown in our model, the space and volume of the houses itself ornamented the orchard further, and so further heals the world. The ornamental, geometric aspect of the result is not trivial. It is essential.

Opposite, on page 613, there is another structure: the pattern of windows, seen through the lattice of beams, trusses, space, major elements, and minor struts and corbels, which I made in the huge gymnasium on the Eishin campus. Again, the guiding principle—and, by the way, the structural invention and detailed design, too—came from the way of looking at this truss, not only in the manner suggested by chapter 6, but also from its existence as an ornament; something beautiful in the ordering of



*Windows in the gymnasium of the Eishin campus. The whole building—the windows, the polished floor, the panes of glass— appears quite stark, and certainly is supremely practical and efficient. Yet, still, all is an ornament. 1985.*

space, positive space, and coherent individual centers, small and large. It is in this sense that everything of beauty, everything natural, is *itself* an ornament. A person's face, in the eyes of God, is an ornament to the world; the eyes ornament the face; the face ornaments the body.

But there is a second, and deeper issue. The function of a thing, and its ornament, are not two separable features: they are *inseparable*. When a

thing is well made, and takes its place in the world in a way that is beneficial, then this thing is always at once practical and at the same time an ornament. The fact that a beautiful thing is, in its totality, an ornament, is what cements it to the world, and makes it necessary. And we must be conscious of this necessity, as we build the world.

This issue will be taken up, more deeply, in Book 4.



11 / EVERYTHING IS JOYFUL ORNAMENT

*For me the joy of building is that, in a profound sense, I feel the whole building as an ornament. It is not a question of putting ornaments ON a building, or INTO the walls and floors and columns, but rather that the whole building is an ornament—whose rooms, passages, staircases, windows, ceilings, paving, benches, lamps are all extensions, pieces of that ornament.*

*You have seen, I hope, that this is an inevitable result of the theory which I*