

You get it, because the field of centers produces such a feeling in you. And it is to produce that feeling that the system of centers was created.

From the examples I have given, you may recognize that the drawing of animals, flowers, human beings are different when they are done in the framework of unfolding. The life in the carved animal, akin to the real life of a real animal, makes the drawn or carved animal different.

More surprising, I think you will find — as the primitives did — that it is natural, even necessary, for animals, plants, flowers, to appear in buildings. I believe that this itself occurs — not from a primitive symbolic idea about orna-

ment, nor because of animistic superstition, nor even just from the love of animals and plants. Rather, I think you will find, the more deeply you have experienced this process, that the impulse to make animals, people, faces, flowers, trees — on the surface of the building walls, carved into the columns, scratched on the surfaces, molded into the materials — follows naturally, and inevitably, from the process of making.

It is a natural outgrowth of the fundamental process with its emphasis on centers — the true unfolding process — and it will play a profound role, ultimately, helping to reconcile you to the land and to our origins.

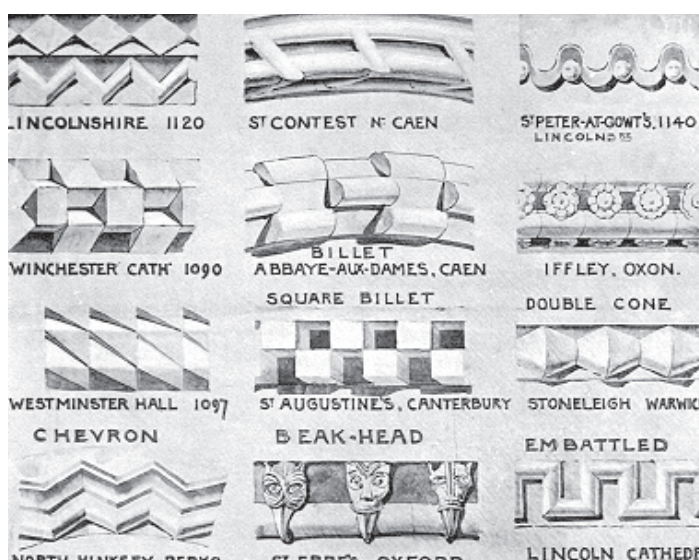


9 / STRUCTURAL QUALITIES CREATED  
BY THE FUNDAMENTAL PROCESS IN ALL ORNAMENT

The ornaments which follow from the fundamental process can take an almost infinite variety of forms, yet — because of the way they arise from the embellishment of latent centers in the whole — will have a certain restricted structure in common. They are, most often, space-filling geometric structures of repeating symmetries. In

traditional architecture, we see these kinds of things on Nigerian panels, Japanese textiles, on medieval stone-carved ornaments, on Islamic plasterwork, on Turkish tiles, on Russian and Norwegian woodcarving.

Of course there is no reason why one should copy any one of these particular traditions. Our



*Mirrors of the self in every standard ornament of Norman architectural forms and moldings.*



*A crude model—yes. It is an early sketch model for a Waldorf kindergarten to be built in Altadena, California: alas not yet built. But it is naive, joyful, humorous, tiny in scale, and in this instance, with the “ropy” spiral columns to be made in plastered concrete, the ornament becomes truly three-dimensional. Naive as it is, I still find this model inspiring because of the naive joy which it contains. Christopher Alexander, Kleoniki Tsotropoulou, Randy Schmidt, Seth Wachtel*

own ornaments of the 21st century and of the 25th century when it comes, will be whatever they are, appropriate to their time, made with our tools, using our motifs.

But if the fundamental process is followed, it is inevitable that ornaments will have certain things in common and a certain profound quality in common. An empty space will be filled with some kind of space-filling form, and one which

leaves positive space between the repeating ornament in two dimensions. We shall see octagons, repeating triangles, repeating squares possibly filled with crosses or diagonals, wavy lines, parallel systems of wavy lines, circles, and so on . . . all of them spaced, at every level of scale, so that the space between them becomes positive.

All the ornaments which I have shown have squares, triangles, stars, crosses, blossoms, lines,



*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