

1. THE EISHIN CAMPUS IN JAPAN

1981-1989

An environment or community will not come to life unless each place, each building, each street, each room becomes unique, as a result of careful and piecemeal process of adaptation.

This is a quality not acknowledged or valued in the history of modern architecture.

2. HOSOI'S DREAM

As Hosoi expressed it in his own words, *"All we wanted was just to find out the normal way through which ordinary school buildings are built in the most sensible way and ordinary fashion"*

Hosoi and I began by looking for a new way of thinking, about the people, about the community, about high school and college education, about the buildings, and about the land.

3. FLAGS: THE REALTY OF THE LAND

The site plan was to be pulled from the land itself, and the land was to deliver its secrets, so that what was built later would come decisively, and uniquely, from the land itself.

Making the site plan is almost like making the buildings themselves. It is done on the real site, with stakes or blocks or flags. As you do it, you have the sensation of building the real place, bit by bit. Emotionally, you feel as though you are literally creating the actual physical school itself. You feel it, even at this early stage of creation, as it will be felt when it is built and finished.

4. CREATING LIFE IN THE ENVIRONMENT

It is immensely hard to help people tell you what they want. Even in the simple practical issues of a building, its entrance, its rooms, its gardens... People cannot easily formulate their vision or their desire.

Since we want people to have their heart's desire, we must help them to see their own visions, drawn out by our words and by their own words.

If we learn to do this well, we will help their dreams to materialize. Their dreams will take concrete, outward form.

MEMO TO TEACHERS, MAY 1982

Dear Members of Eishin Gakuen:

In the first phase of our work together, to design the new school and university, we must build up a verbal picture of the school and college, as we imagine them in our minds. To do this, we shall describe them by a list of "patterns" —which are the essential elements, out of which the school will be made. When this list of patterns is complete, it will contain a nearly complete description of all the essential elements that are going to appear in the project.

After talking with a few of the faculty and students (about fifteen people altogether), we have created a rough, first draft of this list of patterns, for your comment. Please understand that this first draft is extremely far from the final one, and is only meant to stimulate discussion among the faculty. Especially, we want to apologize to those members of the three main committees whom we have not yet met. Time ran very short on my first visit, but I am very much looking forward to receiving your comments when I come back.

We ourselves are working on this list, even while you are reading it, and already have ideas about how to change it for the better. We expect that you will also have reactions to what it says, and

that from your comments, discussions, and suggestions we shall together make a second draft, which is a closer and better description of the school, which we want.

Please read this, and discuss it, with a flexible mind. Do not assume that it is fixed; be ready to receive changes, see a better, or deeper way. Also, most important, there are certainly many things which have been left out of this first list. Please dream freely to find things, which we have forgotten, so that we can include them in the second draft.

Please remember that the thing we want to reach, most of all, is the deep feeling, which will make this school successful. The deep feeling is carried by concrete realities, which appear on this list; and the list will be most successful when the concrete realities, which it contains, carry a very deep feeling indeed.

That is our intention.

—Christopher Alexander

A few examples of the dreams of teachers that, with many others, formed the base for our first rough Pattern Language draft:

“The main entrance is critical to the character of the whole campus, its placement on the edge of the site must be done with great care. I see the main entrance as a gate, where I can greet students and teachers in the morning.”

“There is one essential center, where the sun shines on the buildings, and which catches the spirit of the whole school. It is an open place, where very important buildings lie...Something is there, do not know exactly what, that makes this place catch the spirit of the whole school, and stays in the memory.”

“I see white walls, wooden columns, and heavy wood.”

“I see an inner area of the campus, where most of the daily life of students and teachers will take place. It is the place for meeting and interaction.”

“Each college building should have its own garden for quiet study.”

“There should be a lawn for rest and taking lunch.”

5. SYMMETRY, SIMPLICITY AND GRACE

...The simple shapes are capable of carrying enormous variation, and rich ornament, and majestic interior shapes.

There are no fashionable shapes, or exaggerated shapes. The appearance of symmetry in nature comes about because there is a symmetry of the conditions where the thing in question exists. In most cases the symmetries occur because there is no good reason for *asymmetries* to occur. That is why raindrops are symmetrical. That is why trees are roughly symmetrical. That is why volcanoes are roughly symmetrical.

With buildings it is much the same. Most buildings have characteristics, which generate similar conditions inside according to symmetrical positions inside the building. Most traditional and ancient buildings have a structural plan which is symmetrical (other things being equal), because it is the simplest thing to do, and the most satisfying, and structurally the most stable.

6. DIRECT MANAGEMENT

As makers of buildings, we architects must start now, with a fundamental change of direction. For the last hundred years or so, we have understood building to be an art in which an architect draws a building, and a contractor then builds that building from the architect's plans.

But a living environment cannot be built successfully this way.

To achieve a successful building –one that has life—we must focus our attention on all the crafts and processes, and then, as architects, ourselves take direct charge of the making. We must take full responsibility for the entire building process ourselves.

7. THE GEOMETRY OF LIVING REALITY AND BEAUTY

How Wholeness comes about from Nested and Overlapping Wholes

Nature, of course, has its own geometry. But it is not Euclid's or Descartes' geometry. Rather, this geometry follows the rules, constraints, and contingent conditions that are, inevitably, encountered in the real world.

This geometry is made up of elements pushing and pulling on each other, elements that give way to complex conditions that are not shaped by prescribed configurations, but by reality.

Hence the phrase "living reality"

In order to make a great building –or equally, a tiny ornament – profound, powerful, significant, something really wonderful – we need to learn how wholes, nested and overlapping, can reach the highest level of harmony and wholeness.