

**Notebook 4**  
**WHAT IS ARCHITECTURE?**  
**(2016-2019)**

How do we 'make' sense? How do we involve ourselves as teachers and professors, how do we encourage participation and engagement in this discipline of architecture? This was always about writing, re-writing and editing. The writing assignments tried to introduce students to their 'thoughts', 'prejudices' and 'realities'. Over the years students have had various simple text assignment around the notion of What is Architecture? Each year this varied between glossary exercises, fragments, mini-essays until in 2019 it became a submission of a 500 word text that expanded during four phases of submission into a final 2000-word text. This used the idea of a first untamed text written in the first week of the course. This was then used as the basic text for revision, re-thinking and re-writing. These texts were checked, edited and returned the student for a collaborative process. Students were introduced to many forms of writing on and about architecture. Even writing as architecture. Wishing to make sense of words and language, the American poet John Ashbery was presented. As students read it was suggested they would become aware of how to go in and out of sense each day. This was a new literacy. Not everything makes sense, but the most important thing a poem might carry is not everything needs to make sense. Learning to work with ambiguity and move within words meant that students could save an immense amount of agony in the next few weeks, in the next few years, possibly

for the rest of their life. Writing helped them choose the sense for themselves, making from it what they wished to make it. Architecture, poetry, music, life takes on a unrealized dimension. A extract from Blue Sonata by John Ashbery seemed much more about architecture than we may think:

*Long ago was the then beginning to seem like now  
As now is but the setting out on a new but still  
Undefined way. That now, the one once  
Seen from far away, is our destiny<sup>1</sup>*

Students' ideas may be informed, approximated, prejudiced and opinionated but so are ours as professors. Over the year of early education students would look back on their 'hallucinations' and realities and consider whether they will be re-ordered, strengthened, altered or abandoned. This is also a Prejudice Project – a personal glossary of a student's life in or out of architecture. They were learning 'making' sense out of architecture!

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<sup>1</sup> John Ashbery, Blue Sonata, Selected Poems Carcanet (1998)

Considering my opinion on the definition of architecture remains relatively unchanged, this writing piece acts as more of a reflection of ideas inspired by the assignments this semester. Overall, the assignments of this course did not redefine my idea of architecture. However, they brought to light a great number of methods through which an architectural design can be created. This is arguably much more important.

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See that's the thing about architecture; whether you're trying to define it or decide what makes a structure special, the answer lies in the eye of the beholder. The answers vary and can be interpreted and spun in any way that makes sense in your own mind- in your own world.

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Architecture creates a dialogue about our thoughts and imagination through a language that cannot be perfectly interpreted. Architecture resonates with so many different meanings that are personal to each and every one of us.

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Arguably the one of the most important parts of a dinner is how good it tastes. Christmas dinner is full of flavor and diversity with different meats like ham and turkey, and more bread than one can eat with rolls and stuffing, and a large assortment of sides such as; beans, sweet potatoes with walnuts, and carrots. The flavor behind all these dishes is what really makes people remember it. By taking a bite of their dinner and feeling their taste buds light up, it puts a smile on the face and fullness in their stomach.

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**I hate buildings. They lack the organic shapes of the human body (Not entirely, there is the human relativity incorporated in the scale and construction.) ...buildings are lifeless (No. They have their own way of incorporating life in their geometric (yuck) shapes.), and they're geometric! Although, I can't say that with one-hundred percent clarity because my mind is always indecisive and changing. I see that as a charm to my personality – fight me. It's oddly educational.**

Like when I walk into a family room and can see the traces of children, from the lines on the walls recording their height over the ages, to the toys scattered around the floor or piled into a plastic box. And then I remember the pillow forts that my twin sister and I used to build, and how safe we'd feel hidden beneath the unstable construction of chairs, blankets and any odd pillow we could find. Of course now we would never build such things, too worried by the mess it would cause and the cleaning up that would come along afterwards, and anyways, what use would we have for a mini hiding spot.

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Thousands of books and articles are written about what is architecture, yet our professor asks us - the first year students who have no idea about what is ahead of them in the future as architecture students - to define what architecture is.

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Architecture could mean a lot of different things in society. Many would consider it as buildings, drawing, designing, and so on. In reality, architecture doesn't just mean buildings and drawing, it can be something imaginable. For example, a drawing of a girl riding a pony into to the sky with its magical wand; this symbolizes the imagination of a person's fantasy.

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Architecture is like hosting a Christmas dinner. The analogy of an entrée placement is quite suiting, at Christmas dinner you won't start of by putting out a fruit cake and ice cream at the table's center, followed by a roast turkey on the corner near the vegetarian aunt and a big bowl of stuffing in front of your gluten intolerant nephew.

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After many years of development, adding in a garden and bridge over the pond, the transformation of my grandfather's house finally ended. Architecture is the development of this home, sculpting a place incorporating all the elements of your life that make you comfortable. Provocative leaps in design to create a different kind of environment are crucial in the development of your space, but overall, the architecture of your building must speak to you, a patron or the community. Once you reach that point of pure satisfaction, clarity and assurance in the design; that is when the transformation must stop. From there, all you can do is maintain your space.

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The University environment has not given me a good perception of what architecture is. In my classes I don't sense any connection between me and my peers. I feel estranged from this community and the individuals around don't seem to acknowledge me unless being. There is a form of isolation. I feel like I'm around fake people who tap each other's backs only. I don't get constructive criticism from my peers because I am not worth their time. I know I shouldn't base architecture on that, but I wanted to be seen and I feel lonely and a waste of time. I don't know if it's because architecture students, which could be a representation of the architecture world, is not welcoming towards black people or specifically females with melanin.

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The idea of the architecture of everything and nothing is to suggest the inseparable link between architecture and the world surrounding it, and vice versa. Architecture is not a concept, rather a tool of perception, and through it I was able to observe, in a more detailed sense, the concepts of nothingness and everything.

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How can I put a label on such a nebulous creature, one that materializes a dream as quickly as it inspires another? It is quiet impossible, really, yet many people wish to find a single, tangible answer.

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**I personally think that  
some buildings do not  
deserve to stand, but that  
is quite irrelevant.**