LOOKING BEYOND FORM - EXPLORING THE MULTI-SENSORY QUALITY OF ARCHITECTURE

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KELUM PALIPANE
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA
SRI LANKA

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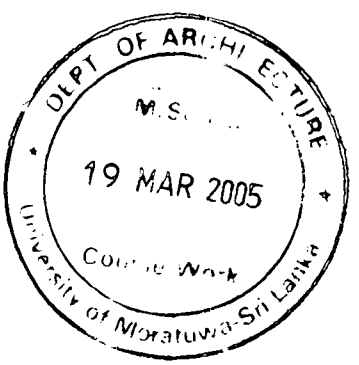

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgment is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signed: *UOM Verified Signature*

(Kelum Palipane)

Signed, Supervisor: *UOM Verified Signature*

(Architect Jayanath Silva)

ABSTRACT

As with most aspects of human perception, architecture is usually perceived through a visual syntax. Though the dominance of vision cannot be undermined, authentic architectural experiences consist of human encounters and bodily confrontations grasped through all the elementary senses including audition, touch, smell and taste. This is architecture of experiential events as apposed to that of image or form.

It can be observed that most contemporary architecture has been created to be objects of immediate persuasion with the impact of the visual image kept in mind. Though they may be visually seductive in two-dimensional representation (as in drawings and photographs), the uniformity, flatness of materials and the absence of a multi-sensory experience soon create a psychological weariness in the minds of those who work, live and visit these places.

This dissertation explores the auditory, touch, smell and taste dimensions of space, and consequently of architectural space though selected case studies. A literary study was conducted to set the theoretical dimensions from which key characteristics of multi-sensory spatial awareness were identified. Selected case studies were then analysed using the body as a tool of measurement while walking the space, focusing on the identified characteristics. The intention of the study was to create awareness of the significance of the subtle role played by the elementary senses in architectural spatial perception.

It becomes evident through the case studies that multi sensory spaces can arise due to a variety of reasons both intentional and circumstantial. Though the contribution of each sensory modality was important in creating a rich experience, some spaces were seen to incline towards a predominant sensory modality that helped articulate the space distinctly within the perceptual realm. Even though the phenomenological aspect of perception was not stressed in the dissertation it was soon realised that this approach could not be avoided as experiences are inadvertently linked to the acts of recollecting, remembering and comparing.

What was discussed in this dissertation and realised through the case studies, enhance the understanding of the role of the senses in spatial perception and how this contributes to strengthening ones experience of self as well as place.

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