

PLACES FOR THE SOUL

ARCHITECTURE AS PLACE- CONVERSION FOR INHABITANTS

A PERSONAL JOURNEY
FROM IDEA-ASSERTION
TO TRANS-PERSONAL LISTENING



- **1960-63** Studied architecture: how to design buildings as **objects**
- **1964-67** Studied sculpture: how form influences space
- **1967-73** Taught architecture: architects experience buildings as objects
-users experience them as environment.
Realized how we *feel* in places involves all the senses,
also aesthetics at a fundamental, not personal level.
- **1970s oil crisis:** Learnt the importance of energy conservation,
renewable energy and low impact technologies.
From concern about how environment is *experienced*,
developed concern about how *we* affect our environment.
- **From 1971** Built 4 houses: learnt how to design buildings that can actually be built.
Also that buildings are so expensive,
I have no right to indulge my design wishes at my clients' expense.
This led to co-design with clients.
- **1979-90** Leading volunteer groups building 2 schools
- **1981** Building Biology
- **1984** Swedish research on Sick Buildings.
Healthy building and energy efficiency can make opposite demands.
But focus on How Environment Affects Us shows they belong together.
- **From 1993** Urban development project in USA:
inseparability of ecological, social and economic sustainability.
- **1990** Developed Consensus Design Process with Dr. Margaret Colquhoun

How did all this translate into practice?

I can describe my journey through the buildings
that resulted



EARLY WORK IN WALES

From converting buildings,
I learnt that even new buildings are
'place conversions'



After 50 years of ruin, this was an overgrown pile of stones
– part of the landscape.

I wanted to retain this feeling of ‘rightness in place’



Wind powered electricity, solid fuel heating, hand dug well.
Extreme wind exposure.



Rooms interlock three-dimensionally,
with sleeping lofts above other rooms



**In massage, there's no part of the body the hand doesn't fit.
What we feel with the hand, we feel with the heart.
Hand-finished plaster surrounds us with a heart-felt sheath.**



Right angles collide harshly.
Interceding obtuse angles bring gentleness to the shape
that windows 'frame'.



MY NEXT HOME, FORMERLY A FARM

This used mini hydro power, solid fuel stove and solar hot water
– a seasonally balanced mix.

But since I've become disabled,
I can't maintain hydro power or solid fuel now.



Organized
around a central
chimney.

The 'free' waste
heat warms four
rooms.



Light from two directions has different colours, giving it more 'life'.
Living light nourishes hormone-regulating organs: pituitary, pineal and
hypothalamus. It also overcomes 'gloom & glare' contrasts.



Deep window
reveals intercede a
mid tone between
bright outside and
darker interior



Individual windows
individualize territory,
making bunks “rooms”



Different rooms host
different activities,
so have different moods.

To be in harmony with the
activity / mood, we need
to be in an appropriate
state of soul.

Every time we pass from
room to room,
we need to make an inner
transformation.

Heavy doors with tactile
latches aid this.



My office



Cowsheds converted into a retreat centre



Social rooms are upstairs
to enjoy the view.

Bedrooms are
downstairs so if you
feel withdrawn or
exhausted you can slip
out without *having* to
socialize.



Bedrooms are
like monastic cells
places of retreat and
prayer



A 20 YEAR EMPTY VILLAGE SCHOOL

Converted into a Steiner school – all by volunteers.

Ultra low budget (20% of contract price).



We asked widely for donations,
but got NONE.

Should we give up or start with
£36 – all we had?

We started. Immediately, help
and donations from people we
never even knew of arrived.

“Whatever you can do, or dream
to do, begin it. There is
beauty, power and magic in it.”

Goethe



Folding down ceiling corners gives rooms
'child scale'



A hard, square room softened by new windows,
hand finished plaster and lazure painting



We fitted classrooms into the roof space.
Window-shape ‘converses’ with wall shape.



STEINER KINDERGARTEN

Also volunteer-built at one third of contract price.

To free children of car journey mood,
they arrive by woodland walk
Green archway, winding path through dark wood with glittering, singing river below



Then a gateway to a play yard,
sunlight-flooded in mornings



Then the entry
gestures invitingly.

Slightly asymmetrical
to not be too
forceful.



This leads to a dark,
narrow, low, twisting
passage – blue to
quieten children



Then a sun-flooded,
golden arrival space.

Here, children leave
outer world clothes
behind.



Then a multi sensory threshold to the classroom.
Different floor surface, direction turn, deep portal,
heavy door and clunking wooden latch.



Classrooms are circular for society building activities like ring games and stories



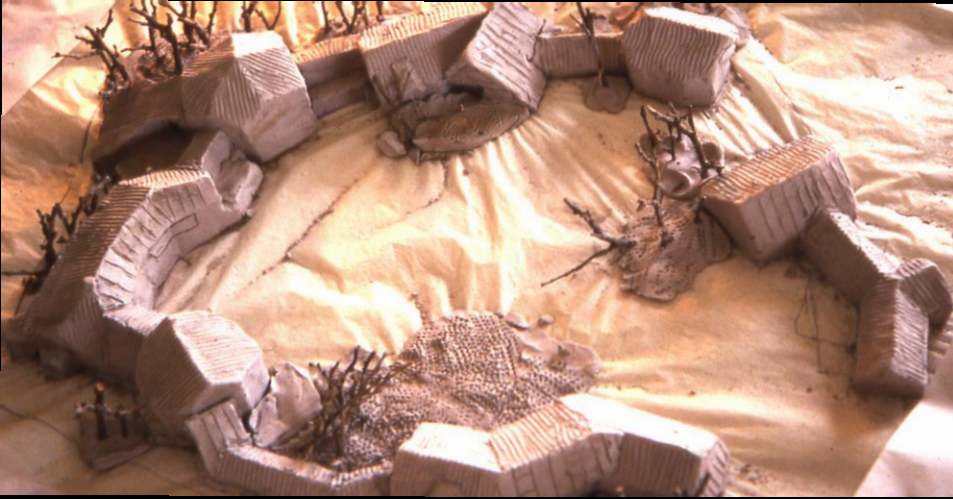
Kitchen alcoves in each room



And alcoves for play



Play alcoves have
miniature coloured
glass windows for a
magical mood



ECO-VILLAGE IN SWEDEN: Designed WITH residents.
Horseshoe layout for maximum sun
and informal supervision of communal play space.



Houses *expandable* (into storage sheds and car ports) and *contractable* (by division into apartments).



Greenhouses and banks as noise-screen and wind-break.

Traffic calmed, pedestrian dominated streets.



Rainwater and wind pumped canal water 'streams' for air-freshening, sun-reflection, privacy distance and delight. Buildings, land form and vegetation for noise and wind shielding.



CALIFORNIA: 10 acre sustainable mixed-use project.

Shops, offices, hotel, apartments. Organized around natural cooling,
view of public spaces & place-making.

Incremental growth rehearsed with this model: creating 'places'.



Light-wells into parking
extract warm air
by solar-chimney
or sun-warmed wall
or roofs on hot North side;
drop air cooled and
negative-ionized
by water-cascades on
shaded South side
(Tajik technique).



Straw bale construction.
Sun heated roof extracts hot
air.

Replacement air drawn
through night cooled
basement.

Vine shading

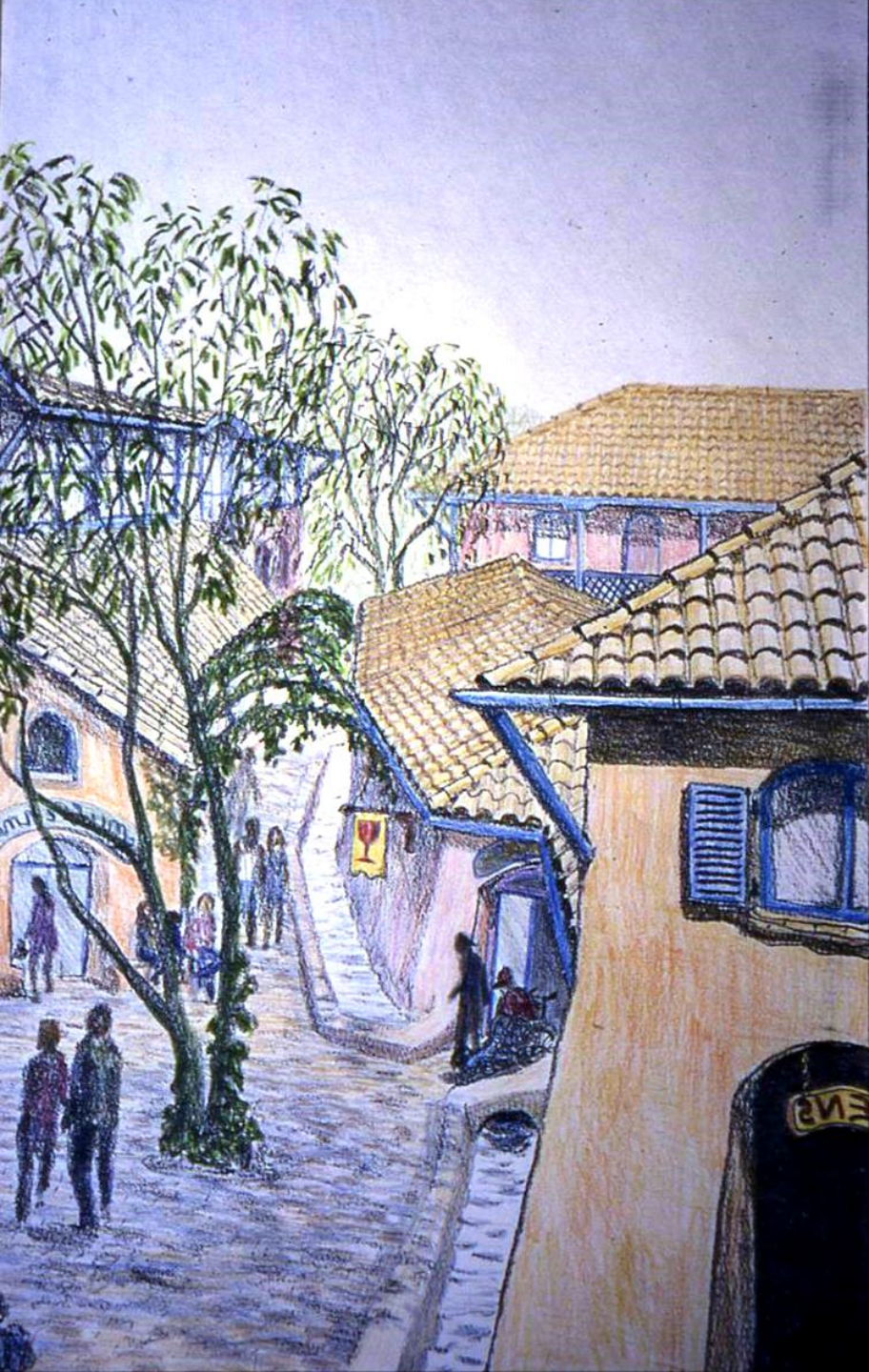
CAFÉ



Straw bale construction.
Solar driven cooling:
tapering roof void
(over insulated ceiling)
and solar chimney
accelerate hot air flow
to draw out indoor air.



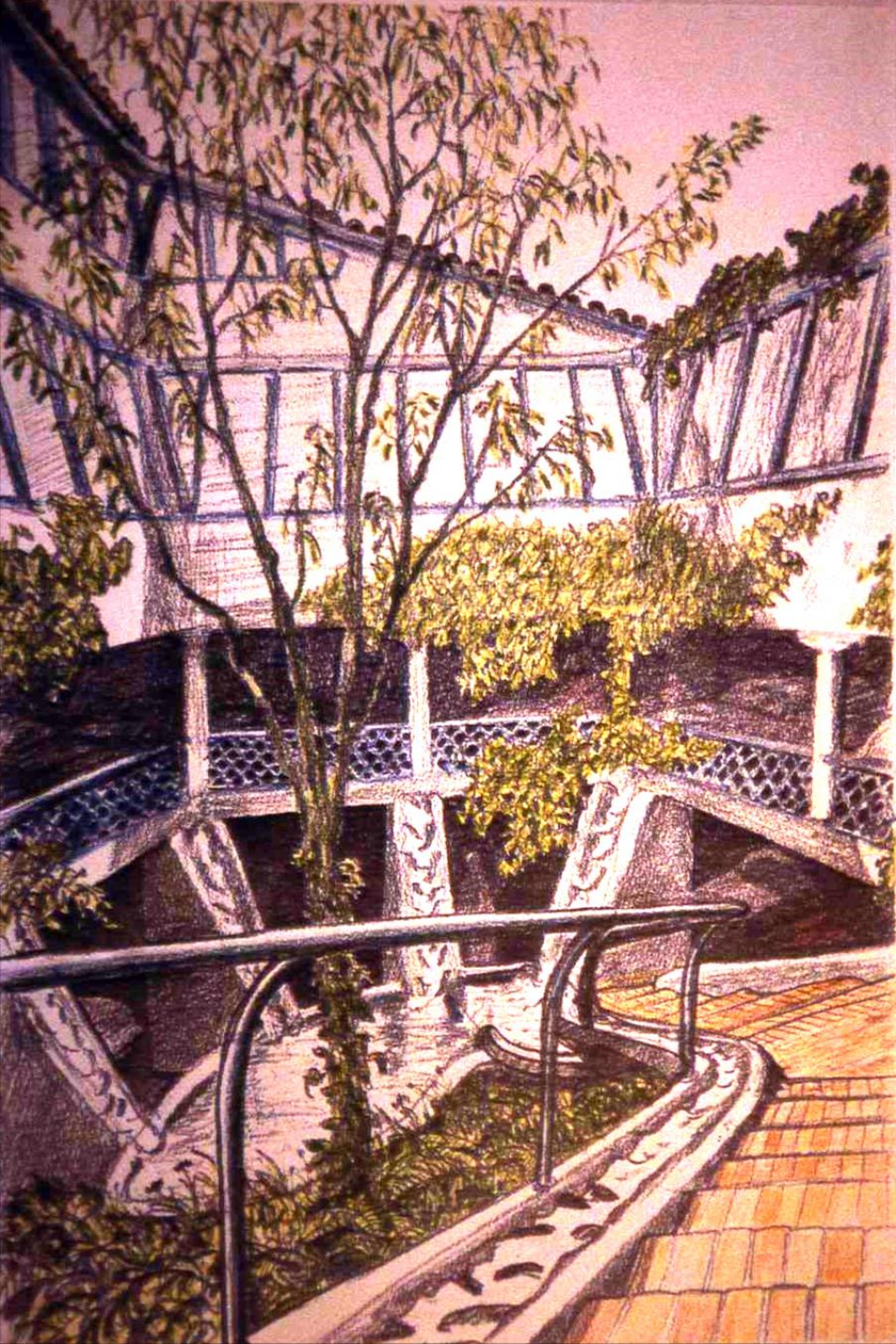
Replacement air is cooled
by dropping down
'cool-tower'
(Arizona version / Iranian technique).



Retail at ground level,
offices above;
apartments with supervisory
view above that.

Rose arbours for leaf-
shading.

Streamlets for cooling and
air-freshening.



Light-well to parking with
water cascades.

Commercial viability
depends on security.

This depends on
populated space.

This depends on delight –
sensory and climatic.

Hence economic
sustainability depends on
social sustainability which
depends on ecological
sustainability which
depends on economic
sustainability



EAST BAY WALDORF SCHOOL (CALIFORNIA)

Consensus design process with teachers.



Consensus design:
fitting large new
house into highly
sensitive site

LIFE SCIENCE CENTRE (SCOTLAND)

Here we developed the 8-stage consensus design process

[described in detail in *Consensus Design*]

PLACE STUDY:

1. What is physically here? [Matter]
2. What is its biography – past to present; then probable future?
What is our arrival journey? [Time-flow]
3. What are the moods of the site's different parts? [Soul-of-place]
4. What does it say it is? [Spirit-of-place]

CONDENSING DESIGN:

5. What *should* it say it is? [Spirit-of-project]
6. What moods would support this? [Soul-of-project]
7. What gestures and journey sequences would support these?
[Movement: flow through time]
8. What physical form and materials would support these? [Matter]

Since this sequence starts with what everyone can easily agree on, and each progressive step is servant of the preceding one, consensus is inherent to the process.



The building form echoes the landscape



All materials from site or nearby.

Limecrete (no CO₂ produced) instead of concrete;
lime mortars and plaster; also cob (earthen) walls



Grid-shell roof







GOETHEAN SCIENCE LABORATORY



Solar heating by conservatory, 4 steps down

This has been a journey
from personally artistic design
to health-giving place-making
for people, place and planet.

Physically, psychologically and spiritually;
technically, socially and ecologically.

BOOKS

Dying: or Learning to Live (Trafford Publishing, 2010)

Environment and Children (Architectural Press, 2007)

Places of the Soul (2nd ed. Architectural Press, 2006)

Consensus Design (Architectural Press, 2003)

Spirit & Place (Architectural Press, 2002)

A Haven for Childhood (Starborn Books, 1998)

Building with Heart (Green Books, 1990)