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Juxt - Suppose: a Graphic Definition of the Creative Process

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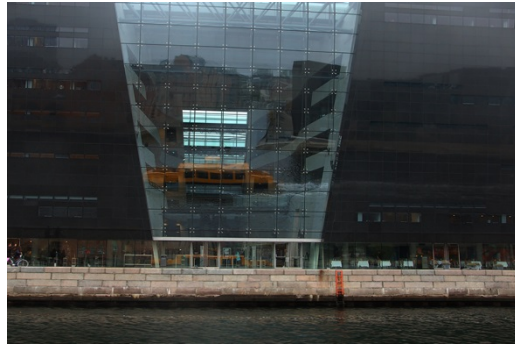
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JUXT - SUPPOSE

a graphic definition of
the creative process

J U X T - S U P P O S E

a graphic interpretation
of creativity...

by Ken Snell

Images on the cover:

Upper left and right: Orestad Plejecenter (senior's home)
by JJW Arkitekter 2011, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Lower left: a view of the Kobenhavn Bibliotek - Royal Danish Library
A.K.A. "*The Black Diamond*" by Schmidt, Hammer and Lassen Architects, 1999
from the water bus.

"Introduction"



Ideas, like images,
are windows...
they focus our attention
by attempting to put the universe
inside a frame.



Windows, because of their transparency, also allow views inside.

This exhibition is a like a window as well.

It affords a view upon creativity but also it provides a glimpse
inside the imaginative world of its author.

Because I hold and point the camera and direct the viewer's gaze
it will be highly personal, idiosyncratic even.

By viewing the images, you insert yourself into the process
seeking personal meaning that might lie between the selected pairs of images...

It is like hearing the implied 5th note in a harmonic chord.

Fascination is the threshold of a daydream...

it is the motivator of reverie and imagination.

Focused attention flips a mental switch changing mind tracks,
gearing down our mental apparatus - bumping thoughts away from our present awareness.

It is like losing your tether and floating into the soul of an object
by slipping between the molecules of solid matter and meeting it inside of yourself.

Possibility is not an integral characteristic of an object
but an internal recognition of its potential.

Upon reflection, encountered objects are not always what they seem.

Creative outcomes are the intrinsic reward of fascination.

I hope there is something in what follows that will captivate your attention.

Images:

Left: Selfie Reflection on Glass Box Installation, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen.

Right: Selfie Reflection on Glass Studio wall Dansekapellet Copenhagen

"The Texture of Time"



People and their things; possessions, buildings, cities - age at different speeds
layering multiple time scales on top of each other.

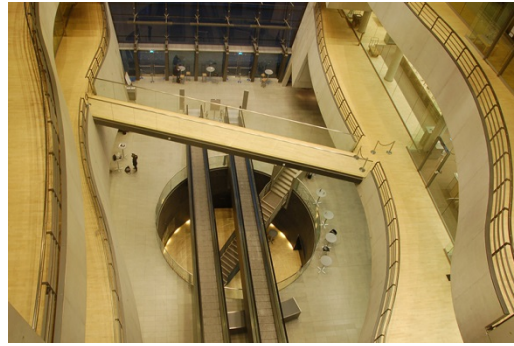
A once dark stairwell
through a 500 year process of ruin and collapse
is now open to the sky. Its people though, are all gone now.
Sans roof, sans stair, sans darkness, sans people
this functionless space gathers its emptiness together
and re-inserts itself into the present
finding renewed purpose as a light well,
the *"drilled void"* of Steven Holl.

Whether this is
an act of intentional borrowing and creative re-invention
shrouded within an act of conscious metaphor making
OR
the projection of a design intention by an independent observer
through a process of aesthetic skepticism
this connection of the new and the old together into the warp and weft of time
by the maker or observer or both
is in either circumstance, a creative act.
It is not known if Steven Holl has been to Lochranza Castle ruin or
if he is drawing upon other lived experience
but somehow the maker and the observer
arrive at the same place...
synchronistically.

Images above:

Left: Lochranza Castle, Arran Island, Scotland 15th century
Right: The Drilled Void, Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow by Steven Holl, 2014.

“Creativity is a Bridge”



Though the distances are less than microscopic
there are great synaptic canyons in the interior of our minds
and an abyss between the left – right, verbal – visual hemispheres.
Ideas are connections that bridge the gaps joining these shores together
so that we can carry metaphors across your minds from one side to the other
while watching them transform from words to pictures
or watching our images accrue language.

The creation of interior imagined worlds also mimics the creation of possibilities.
It is the ability to walk about inside of something that does not yet exist in concrete form.

Imagine it first then occupy it in this noumenal world.
Then draw it, build it and re-occupy it in the phenomenological world.

Our constructed designs are familiar to us because
when we visit them in the flesh
we have already been there before –
Flesh-less.

Images:

Left: The Buchanan Gallery Shopping Mall, Glasgow, by Jenkins and Marr.

Right: Kobenhavn Bibliotek - Royal Danish Library

A.K.A. “*The Black Diamond*” by Schmidt, Hammer and Lassen Architects, 1999.

“The Idea of a River”



If you were born on a desert and had never seen a river in your life could you understand what a river is from this abstract artistic installation?

Only God, not humans, can create a river.

People experience it and through sensation, embody it
and then they remember it.

Our objects are sticky – we attach feelings and memories to them.

However, memories of a thing are not the thing.

This man-made river is contained,
trapped and unchangeable like a childhood memory,
dislocated in time and space...

sans frogs, sans fish, sans plants, sans ocean smell.

It exists without a headwater – just a circulation pump
round and round the water goes in a distorted water cycle
becoming a generalized abstraction of the real thing
a sterile and yet vibrant memory.

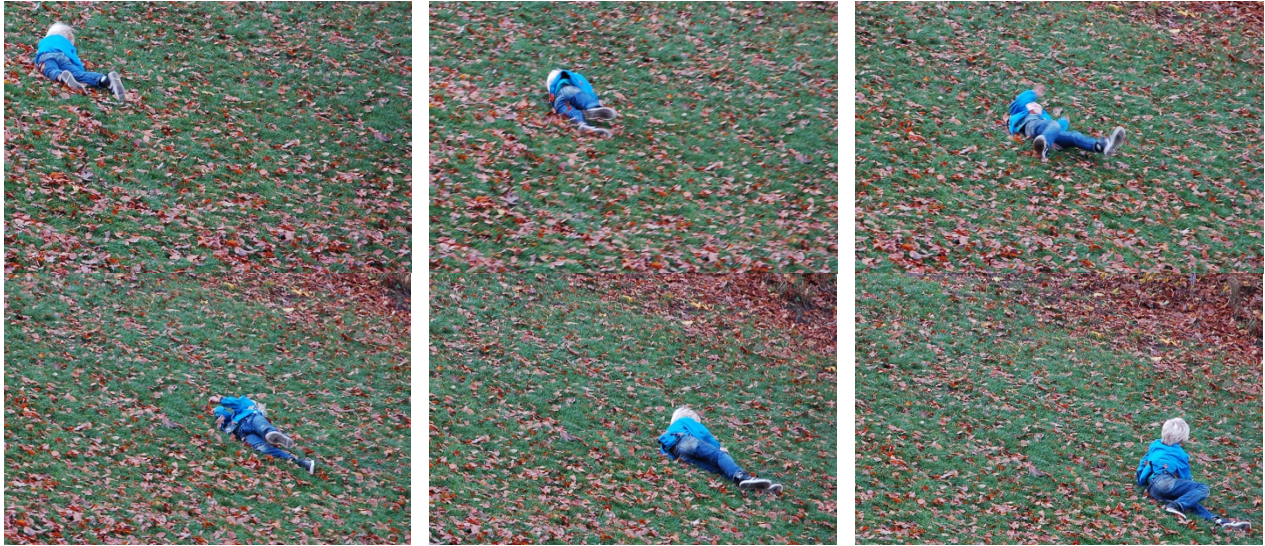
Meaning results from the creative movement between the sensual and the emotional,
between the sensual and rational
and then from the transformation of these back again into concrete form
as architecture.

Images:

Left: Bridge over the Iorsa Water, Isle of Arran

Right: *“Riverbed”* an Art/Landscape Installation by Olafur Eliasson
at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, Denmark (2014).

"Gravity and Time"



Is this just a little Boy rolling down a hill
OR can it be something else as well?
can it be an expression of Gravity and time?
Both of which, in their own way,
attempt to pull us towards the earth.

A flexible creative mind can observe one thing
but perceive many diverse ideas and concepts.

Humans are symbol makers.

The metaphors we make and keep
determine the paradigms of our existence.

Images above:

Little Boy Rolling Down a Hill at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art

“Elaboration”



The physical realization of an idea is not instantaneous.
Buildings gain corporality through a long, slow process.
The first idea-shapes are sometimes fuzzy reminiscences
of half remembered objects encountered in the dim past,
their edges often undefined.

Creativity does not end with conceptualization.
It must be extended to the elaboration of all the building's details
right down to the scalloped edges of the window flashing
and the ridge detail of a thatched roof...

How far along is your idea?

Images above:

Left: Hatched Roof House, Copenhagen

Right: Scalloped Window - Sill Flashing Detail, Copenhagen

“There are many ways to build a wall...”



Just as there is no single way to *“be in this world”*,
There is never just one way to do anything.
A creative response to a design situation is fluent.
It should generate a seemingly endless number of responses
...ad infinitum.

If there is no single solution, no obviously right way to do anything,
then how do you choose what you are going to do?

What guides your hand?

If Mother Nature uses *“Natural Selection”*

what device do humans use to make a decision?

Variety without discrimination extends outward infinitely.

Because intuition is insufficient reason

a creative education should create better choosers
by enhancing judgment of that endless stream of possibilities.

Images above:

Constructed sample walls at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts – School of Design

“Originality alone cannot define creativity”



Pretty, little house on a narrow, little lane
that stands out from all the others around it.

Because it dares to be different
in its blueness,

its mix of round and triangular geometries,
the use of steel and glass block,
it is alone in its uniqueness.

It would be easy to find and easy to remember because
it doesn't try very hard to fit in or to be like all the others.

Do you too wonder what the neighbours think?

It is dangerous to judge a book by its cover or
a house by its façade, but...

to what purpose does all this originality serve?

Once you have shocked the neighbours
they eventually get accustomed to it and move on.

Like the Eiffel tower or Centre Pompidou
it becomes “no longer radical”.

The next one on the lane who tries to be unique will have to try that much harder...

thus, we have found the path to randomness, chaos and disorder
where all buildings attempt to elbow their way to the front of the crowd.

and so I ask again

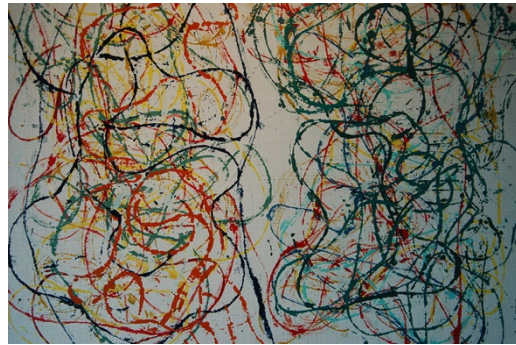
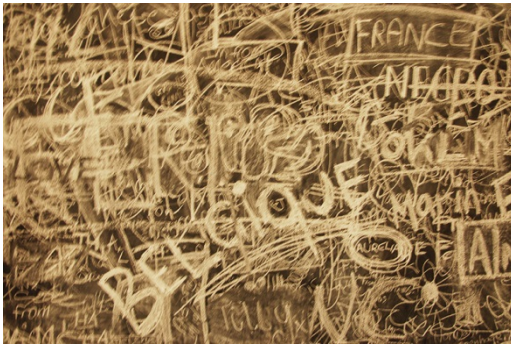
to what creative purpose does all this originality serve?

Images above:

Left: Park Terrace Lane, Glasgow

Right: House on Park Terrace Lane, Glasgow

“The Narcissism of a Line”



So much of what we call contemporary art is so very personal. It is often about an individual’s private theoretical conceptualizations that often leave the public asking “What does it mean”? Attempts to borrow classical definitions of creativity and methods of creative education from the world of contemporary art and apply them to the discipline of architecture are wholly inadequate for the task of educating technologists.

Architecture is not just a sculptural object, it is also a social process and it exists in the public realm so it affects everyone. In the face of burgeoning waste, global warming and resource depletion the practice of architecture as self-indulgent personal expression in the way of the modernist archi-heroes is frivolous narcissism.

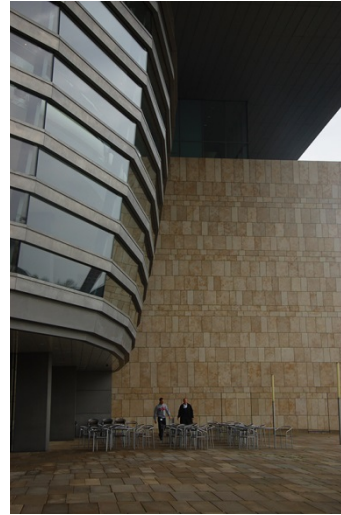
Creativity within architectural technology must be hitched to purpose and social intention. The old approach will lead to the continued marginalization of the entire architectural profession.

Images above:

Left: The voice of the public: blackboard at the Design Museum Denmark intended to capture the inspirations of visitors to the exhibit.

Right: Painting “formio and cigarette” 1961, by Asger Jorn at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, Denmark (2014).

"The Pursuit of Purpose"



If art is not intended to be occupied
while the buildings that we make are occupied,

why is architecture considered to be an art, not a behavioural science?

If art is form without function then
architecture is form with purpose.

Art rarely has to support the weight of its occupants or keep them warm and dry.

The definition of Art is not often bonded to the science of its construction.

Poorly made Art may be unappealing, but poorly made buildings simply Fail.

It is the service of intended purpose that gives our buildings meaning.

An architectural definition of creativity, and by extension the role of education,
should serve this more noble purpose rather than solely
that of personal artistic self-expression.

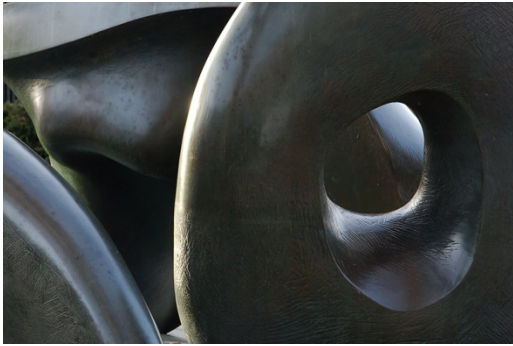
We should enlarge our definition of creative architectural work from the classic arts
to include the grace and ease in *"the pursuit of purpose"*.

Images above:

Left: *"Dynamic Manor"* by Jean Dubuffet, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art

Right: *"Copenhagen Opera House"* by Henning, Larson Architects, 2005.

“Anthropocentric Paradigms”



Can you find a straight line anywhere on your body? Is it symmetrical?

Are your right hand and right foot the same as your left hand or foot?

Is there such a thing as a standard human unit?

Gaia builds with complex curves.

It is human-kind that sees efficiencies in straightness and sameness.

Such balance and precision are industrial machine age terms.

Balance in nature is more forgiving, it gives a little, accommodates small differences.

What is natural to us and what is considered “foreign” or “normal”

informs our paradigms of usefulness and purpose.

These paradigms create expectations and are the background context

for what we call unique or novel.

What we consider to be creative is often just outside of our own paradigm.

It is unusual because it belongs to another context beyond our lived experience.

Often what is novel to us, is normal to others.

Definitions of creativity cannot be separated from their cultural context.

Images:

Upper Left: Henry Moore, “x” at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art

Others: Glasgow Science Center and Imax Theatre, 2001 by BDP – “Building Design Partnership”.

“Touch the Sky - Touch the Earth”



Some buildings, reach up to sky as if they were in love with it.
They try to bring it down to the ground by reflecting it upon their facades
breaking it into little pieces.

Some buildings touch the ground lightly as if in abhorrence
as if afraid of being pulled under the earth's surface
to join their ancestors already languishing there...
built by human hands, like Frankenstein's monster, forever imperfect
stuck in the purgatory of their human cities
stuck between the Earthly Mother and Heavenly Father they exist
pulled in two directions.

Architectural Creativity is born of a similar tension
between the ephemeral expressive artistic concept
and concrete purposeful function.
Architecture mediates between individual and cultural expressions
between the art and the science of existence.

Images:

Upper: Bella Sky Hotel, Orestad, Copenhagen 2011, designed by 3XN

Lower Left: Krystallen, Copenhagen by Schmidt, Hammer and Lassen Architects, 2011.

Lower Right: Curtain Wall, Orestad, Copenhagen.

"Creativity is Orange"



Orange
neither yellow nor red
is new, it owns itself, it is self-possessed.
like the child who
is neither Mother nor Father.
It is unique unto itself
and separate from its origins.
Everything comes from somewhere, something
and it is against this background of preceding objects
that we take the measure
of an object's uniqueness.
Creativity must have a context if it is to be measured.
It is within a social context that our values dwell
unseen.

Images:

Left: Modernist orange chair, Design Museum Denmark, Copenhagen

Right: Orange Bicycle, Copenhagen, Denmark.

“Surprise”



Buildings are similar to people in that they respond to their surrounding context – sometimes inconsistently. Neither are what they seem to be at first glance. People often respond differently to the same question depending on how they feel at the moment. Sometimes the front and the back of a building give different answers to the same question “How do you want to face the world”? They march to different drummers, each façade like each personal situation responds to different voices. Sometimes the answers surprise us and fill us with wonder...

Images:

Left: VM Mountain, Copenhagen, street view.

Right: VM Mountain, Park view.

designed by BIG (Bjorn Ingels Group) 2008.

"Idea Vessels"



Water



Light



Earth



Moon

Oceans, tugged by the moon, blown by the wind, warmed by the sun
called back to the clouds by the voice of its Mother
flow in currents, incessantly.
Never to be still.

Light cannot be captured without being changed into heat or electric charge.
Its particles escape like sand or water flowing through the fingers of the universe
that tries in vain to hold it.

Moon-mirrors, glowing in the darkness, reflect the sun to us
from the depths of the void that is night.

Tendrils, invisible umbilical cords of energy
tether the earth to the sun creating a temporary orbital balance
without which the earth and moon would spin away with the expanding universe.

These same tendrils, invisible umbilical cords also
hug the moon, the oceans and the atmosphere to the earth
and pull the little boy down the hill
in a rolling mass - all arms and legs and – JOY.

Just as Gaia is drawn in by the sun
she in return
draws things unto her
(continued)...

Images:

Water: The Stacks in the Pentland Firth off Duncansbyhead, Northern Scotland, 2014.

Light: Elevator, stair at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen

Earth: Sculpture Garden, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen.

Moon: Played by itself but from John O'Groats Scotland, 2014.

"Idea Vessels - continued"



Water



Light



Earth



Moon

Thoughts leap across the synaptic gaps
like a forest fire leaping across the tree tops lighting up the night sky of my mind.
Patterns of illumination, the Aurora Borealis of thought
drawn across my mind by the force of creative energy
momentarily holds ideas in precarious balance
until, tether broken, they careen off
into the expanding universe of my diminishing memory.

Ideas, like particles of sand or drops of water
slip through the fingers of my mind.
I need a vessel in which to hold them, contain them
so that I can carry them forward in my life and keep them with me.
I need a metaphor. I need an image.

Creativity is the gravitational energy of mind
it moves ideas about by holding them in precarious vessels
which are the metaphors of lived experience
and the basis of language and thought itself.

Images:

Water: The Stacks in the Pentland Firth off Duncansbyhead, Northern Scotland, 2014.

Light: Elevator, stair at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen

Earth: Sculpture Garden, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen.

Moon: Played by itself but from John O'Groats Scotland, 2014.

“Conclusion”



Creativity is delicate and
unaware of its own existence at first
maturing into a conscious way of being with the world.

Creativity is a witness to possibility.

Creativity is not a singular response but a multiplicity of responses.
Vibrant, seemingly limitless.

Creativity is an engine, running under its own steam – directionless
You are its compass, its navigator, its rudder.

Life is a response to what you encounter.
If you could do anything at all with that gift that is life,
what would you do?
What guides your hand?

Images:

Left: Child playing in the atrium of the Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow.
Right: Boys Playing in *“Riverbed”* an Art/Landscape Installation by Olafur Eliasson
at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen, Denmark (2014).