

The Death of Depth; Drawing to Remember.

Pilgrimage in Iceland; An Odyssey for the Modern Day Adventurer

Chloe Rice

(Master's of Architecture Thesis, 2011-2012 Academic Year)

Thesis Intent

This thesis examines the essence of spatial quality and its effect on one's emotions as place is experienced. Landscapes which are truly alive, can evoke deep emotional connections which speak to one's sense of self and to a larger universal humanity. These landscapes allow us to truly be in the moment, one which is not bound by time: past, present or future.

Through a method of drawing, designers will be able to infuse positive emotional qualities into the atmosphere of the spaces they create. Drawing will be the process by which a designer can purposely compose places that embody emotional responses which lift the human spirit. By employing drawing as the primary method to best study the variables that make up a center of deep feeling, the intention will be to demonstrate how this process can inform the design of physical space

One of the greatest problems of our time is the fast paced nature of our consumer society. It leaves little time for people to stop and think. People do not have the chance to take in their surroundings, they slowly begin to care less and less about them. In effect, we become disconnected and apathetic. Over time these experiences become the everyday norm, in this lies the danger. This modality, once a temporary substitute for something richer, has become mistaken for the original, engaged mode.

Drawing as a Tool

Designers have the gift to imagine and create places that would allow for the growth and depth of the soul. In order to achieve this, the creator must first look into their own soul and understand themselves. A designer's understandings of their own experiences are what they potentially project onto the world. Designers should reflect back through the traces of their past and understand the moments which made them whole. There are methods which can be used to explore these experiences: past, present, and future. The act of drawing can help designers discover what makes the moments so memorable for them. Drawing has been used as a tool by architects for centuries. It has been how they have been able to record and create moments of beauty. John Berger states that one reason for this is that, "It is the actual act of drawing that forces the artist to look at the object in front of him, to dissect it in his mind's eye and put it together again; or, if he is drawing from memory, that forces him to dredge his own mind, to discover the content of his own store of past observations."

The act of drawing is a way of making these emotions become a concrete reality. The places that most affected us are the best area to start, as David Hume says "Those perceptions which enter with most force and violence we may name impressions; and under this name comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul." We can learn from what we record because we choose to draw what speaks to us about a place. The drawings may not have to be exact representations but they will allow us to pull out the most important qualities. It takes several in depth studies of different types of drawings to truly perceive and understand a space.

Design Agenda

I chose the country of Iceland as the place to explore and test the theories developed during the research process. I had the chance to visit this extremely beautiful, engaging, inspirational and even haunting island. During the visit I took a road trip along the southern coast of the Island and the architectural ideas for this project were conceived from this experience. Using the design process mapped out during my research I choose six locations to place an intervention in the landscape. These sacred spaces are meant to amplify the landscape experience. They also call attention to qualities of the place which at first may not be evident or possible to engage in without the architecture acting as the medium. The landscape of Iceland changes drastically within minutes and each of these locations deal with a drastically different landscape condition. During the trip I collected information, took pictures, videos, painted and did many sketches. On the return I went into further depth at each location using the memory and lasting feelings of the places to create more drawings and eventually design of the space. Each intervention was a test on the initial design process and it was adapted throughout the length of the project.

After leaving the city of Reykjavik the highways turn into a two lane road, route one. This road circles around the entire country. The center of the island is uninhabited so this is the connecting life line. Along the road one will occasionally pass another driver, a hitchhiker, or a small town but for the most part it is the driver and the road. Most of the time the road hugs the coast. The story of the thesis is told from the point of view of a lonely adventure taking a road trip and stopping along the way to experience some of the natural wonders.