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MODELING ERIK ERIKSON’S DIAGRAM OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Elizabeth Danze

Introduction

Erik Erikson is known for his innovative method for diagramming personality development using a two-dimensional form. In his 1950 book, "The Ecology of Human Concerns," he shared a diagram that was subsequently published. Friedman (1999) notes that Nietzsche's diagram of human development is the first in which processes appeared on two-dimensional forms. However, in the 1950s, American architect and urban planner Elizabeth Danze created a diagram that was a result of her involvement in anthropological studies.

Danze’s diagram is a three-dimensional representation of human development, illustrating the interplay between physical and psychological processes. It is a form of architectural diagramming that reflects the developmental stages of the individual, with each stage corresponding to a specific time period in life. The diagram is designed to be used in architectural education and planning, and it is a valuable tool for understanding the complexities of human development in a spatial and psychological context.

Danze’s diagram is a powerful representation of the interconnectedness of physical and psychological processes, and it is a testament to the importance of architectural education in understanding the complexities of human development.

Conclusion

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Erikson and the Two-Dimensional Diagram

At an early stage, the Diagram was published in his work Childhood and Society (1950) and later in his classic The Life Cycle Completed (1959). It describes eight stages of human development: Infancy, Early Childhood, Play Age, School Age, Adolescence, Young Adulthood, Adulthood, and Old Age. The Diagram consists of eight rows and eight columns—a "table" in modern notation. Each box in the chart represents a potential relationship either vertically or horizontally. The chart illustrates the interrelation of the eight stages of human development and their interactions.

As Erikson wrote: "the chain of critical developmental stages extended vertically. Each stage following another in a progression—but how each stage was similar to and different from the others. In the chart each row and column is a unique entity; each box represents a potential relationship either vertically or horizontally. The chart shows the chain of critical developmental stages extended horizontally. Each stage following another in a progression—but how each stage was similar to and different from the others."1

The Diagram was created by Joan Erikson, who used it to understand the development of her husband, Erik Erikson. Joan Erikson realized, "Actually I never really thoroughly understood all the implications until I began to participate in the process of setting up the diagram itself as a reconstructive tool for my own life."

The diagram, like Tufte's example, also has some of the characteristics of a statistical graphic. Erikson's Diagram, like Tufte's, is a "powerful example of a statistical graphic."2

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Buildings are inert objects, but our experience of them transcends the physical realm and extends into our deepest consciousness. Architecture, in particular, which moves beyond mere building, strives to enhance the human condition and promote emotional well-being through the manipulation of space, light, material, and form. Psychoanalysis is concerned with many things, among them, the means by which places enter our psyches and become a part of who we are. Both psychoanalysts and architects care about people’s identities and memories, hopes and dreams. These human constructs are replete with spatial, architectural images, images of safety, danger, permanence, enclosure, and reflection, as well as with a full range of emotions.

Within the overlap of psychoanalytic and architectural discourses lies the emotional tonus of real and imagined places, whether at the scale of the city or the scale of the house, and it is this area of mutual concern that inspired the current volume of CENTER.
At the core of architecture is our experience of it, while psychoanalysis is the study of that inner experience. *Psychoanalysis and Architecture* is a collection of essays in four sections, the first written by psychoanalysts, each giving an account of an individual’s inner confrontation with architecture. The second section of the book is written by architectural scholars who in varying ways—from examining the work of architectural critic Adrian Stokes, to the ways the room where analysis takes place impacts the unfolding treatment—bring the two disciplines together. One of the most celebrated and controversial architects, Frank Lloyd Wright is written about from a psychoanalytic point of view and is the subject of the third section of the book while the last section ranges from a psychoanalytic study of the Bauhaus to the way the Jewish Museum in Berlin and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial foster the process of mourning.

Graham Foundation Publication Grant, $5,000, 2004
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND ARCHITECTURE

As an Architect’s View of Introspective Space: The Analytic Vessel

ELIZABETH A. DANZIG

The doors in the house are most important. It is the thing in life that is least interesting for a young man. After a while he has become more interested in it, but not in the way they think he is. It is the thing that has given him the feeling and the interest in the house, and the interest in the house has been growing.

The psychoanalyst describes the house as a symbol of the patient’s internal world. The house is a container of the patient’s unconscious, a place where the patient can retreat and explore.

The analytic vessel refers to the therapeutic relationship between the analyst and the patient. The relationship is based on trust, understanding, and empathy.

If we believe in the essence and objectives of psychoanalytic work in terms of the more general purpose of psychotherapy and therapy, which is to bring about a state of mental health and happiness in the patient.

Figure 1: Ego and the Search for Analysis (Freud, 1917)

The Conscious and the Search between Analytical and Egoality

The unconscious physical quality of the analyst’s presentation was known for its ability to bring about a state of mental health and happiness in the patient. The relationship between the analyst and the patient is based on trust, understanding, and empathy.

Several specific points are made in the design of the analytic work. These may seem minimal, but we agree with architectural meaning and consequence for the work that is produced. The work is produced to a specific and definitive judgment of the design and the design of the team specifically.

The design is made of two parts: the first is the analytic effort and the second is the analytic process. The analytic effort and the analytic process are made in a way that the analytic work may be described as a way of thinking about the process of analytic work. The analytic process is an analytic effort that is made to be analytic.

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In 2007, Danze co-organized – with Sonnenberg and Professor Michael Benedikt – the symposium Space and Mind at the School of Architecture, sponsored by the Center for American Architecture and Design. The symposium was based on the belief that architecture, beyond mere building, is vitally concerned with promoting mental health and emotional well-being through the creation and manipulation of space and material and the conveyance of a sense of identity, security, and atmosphere. Psychological and psychoanalytic discourse is replete with spatial metaphors and observations of the emotional tonus of real places. Environmental conditions, both physical and social, are matters of concern common to both disciplines as they contribute to health, education, contemplation, reflection, nurturance, security, and even the stimulation of creative endeavors. The symposium examined potential parallels, connections, and common concerns between these disciplines in the interest of promoting a dialogue that would enrich both fields. In attendance and also participating were students, academicians and practitioners in both psychology and architecture.
"The treatment of the insane is conducted not only in, but by the asylum."
*William Dean Fairless, 1861*

**EXCERPT**

**Dr. Thomas Kirkbride and the Kirkbride Asylums**

The archetypal American insane asylum was once a common sight at the edges of American towns. Approximately three hundred were built in the United States before 1900, the design of almost all influenced by one man, Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride.

Dr. Kirkbride was a psychiatrist, architectural advisor, author, asylum administrator and advocate for the mentally ill. He believed that the physical design of asylums could have a curative effect on patients by giving form to his belief in “moral treatment.” This concept emphasized self-control, predictability, order and a connection to nature. The asylums were designed to reinforce this control by giving careful attention to every detail to promote a healthy environment. In 1854 Dr. Kirkbride wrote *On the Construction, Organization and General Arrangements of Hospitals for the Insane*, a tremendously influential treatise. In addition, he was a tireless self-promoter who employed public opinion and exposure to the press to further his influence and his cause.

The middle of the nineteenth century was a period of optimism and reform. Typical treatment of mental illness prior to this time was generally deplorable, inhumane and frequently consisted of so-called “madmen and lunatics” being shackled and perpetually confined (Yanni, 2007). In response to this, Kirkbride believed his proposed “moral treatment” could be embodied in the design and configuration of an ideal mental institution. To him, architecture was unequivocally thought to have the power to heal. A commonly held belief at the time was that progress and modern life, as embodied in the squalor of cities, was a major cause of insanity. A connection to nature was seen as restorative and healing (Yanni, 2007).

The typical Kirkbride asylum configuration consisted of a symmetrical, stepped, or echelon-shaped linear plan with an expressed central core where men occupied one wing and women the other. The articulated central element, where visitors met patients in parlors, established the building as civic in scale, and was typically marked with a portico or similar feature. The symmetry and straightforward design conveyed order, stability, and structure. Each step in the echelon constituted a “pavilion” or ward. (Figure 2). These allowed patients to be placed according to the severity of their disease, with the loudest most disruptive patients moved to the outer wings. This also served as an incentive system; being moved outward was punishment and inward a reward, as the inner wards were usually better maintained and tended (Yanni, 2007). The superintendent and his family lived on-site as did many of the staff and their families. The ideal building consisted of 250 patients so that the superintendent and his wife could visit each patient every day, according to the paternal model.
Integrating the Creative Process with the Analytic Space: Its Visual and Spatial Qualities

By focusing on the setting and in particular the spatial qualities of the space in which psychotherapy takes place, this session considered the impact that the physical environment has on the unfolding treatment. The discussion sought to sensitize analysts to examining their patient’s visual and spatial experiences and enhance awareness of their shared surroundings. The exchange between psychotherapist and analysand occurs in a shared and inherently intimate space, and its role in that interaction is frequently overlooked. This issue was described in a peer reviewed paper by Danze in *The Annual of Psychoanalysis*, Volume 33, 2005, and was further elaborated upon by Danze and Sonnenberg, in *Space & Psyche*, 2013. This seminar examined how the design of the room is not a passive but rather a full participant in the creative work of analysis, and how participants can improve their professional competence with increased awareness of this concept.

Integrating Right and Left Brain Activity in the Creative Process

This session explored the need to recognize the connection between right brain thinking and visualization processes used by artists, architects, and designers and left brain processes usually used by analysts who emphasize the use of language in their clinical work. This session encouraged analysts to examine their visual and spatial experiences to improve and enhance communication with patients by blending the use of words and visual associations. Lecture, readings, discussion and short exercises were used to engage and stimulate the visual part of the mind and to improve understanding of the connection and integration of spatial and visual thinking into verbal, logical, and analytical reasoning. Integrating visual, spatial and nonverbal thinking into the process of psychoanalysis enriches the potential exchange between analysts and their patients.
The work of this studio is a direct response to a critical disconnection between the veteran and civilian communities. Students explore the role of architecture in creating a place of healing, engagement and connection and develop a prototype building that merges architecture and psychoanalysis to improve the experience of military veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Historically, several societies successfully reintegrated combat veterans and healed the collateral psychological wounds of the community. The ancient city of Athens was at war for more than 100 years, and provides a model of a community healing the wounds of war. The Theater of Dionysus is one example of a sanctioned environment where the trauma of war was communally assuaged for combatants, veterans, and citizens. Here, veterans and active duty soldiers acted in dramas set in wartime settings, written by playwrights such as Aeschylus and Sophocles (themselves veterans of military campaigns) and were witnessed by other veterans and members of the citizenry.

By merging architecture, psychology and the arts, students developed a prototype that draws on historic examples and the origins of theater to address severe post-conflict psychological problems of both veterans and the broader community, which must accommodate its traumatized veterans. Citing innovative programs such as The Telling Project provide a setting for cathartic and ritualized communal conversation where veterans speak directly to their own communities concerning their experiences, humanizing and making immediate what are otherwise abstract and polarizing ideas and issues.

The design proposal is a place where soldiers, veterans, and members of the community come together for a wide range of planned as well as spontaneous activities. It is not a memorial, but rather a setting that supports an active process of collective healing. The project is founded on the shared belief that such a sanctioned public forum provides a model for healing that integrates architecture, psychoanalysis, theater, and the arts. Guidelines and objectives for the prototype were developed with input from veterans and military leaders, psychologists and psychiatrists, filmmakers, authors, artist, architects and students.

Through a series of short projects, lectures and presentations by guest speakers the studio asked how is theory is embedded in design? What are different ways of approaching design research? And, how might psychoanalysis and psychology (steeped in theory) inform our thinking of architecture and design? Specific intentions and methods of and for making will be examined through a series of analysis, programmatic organization and formal composition of individual and multi-unit spaces. Introspection and reflection will be both subject of and method for design.
Through a series of short projects, lectures, readings and field trips this studio's work concerned itself with the purposeful inquiry of design research and design in several forms, contexts and scales all related to and surrounding issues of homelessness. Students designed housing options and social services centers for homeless families. They collaborated with local institutions in identifying the social and cultural challenges of homelessness facing the city of Austin.

Through the process of design, students compared two approaches to locating, distributing and configuring housing and services – high density, concentrated and low density, intermixed. The designs focused on the physical and cultural contexts of selected sites, design strategies developed with an understanding of the psychological experiences of homelessness for parents and children in order to create spaces of mental health well-being, and the regulatory constraints and opportunities for constructing housing within local cultural, political and economic contexts.

The course also examined how the field of psychoanalysis and psychology (steeped in theory) inform our thinking of architecture and design. Assignments included reading essays from *Space & Psyche* (Bachelard, Benedikt, Danze, and Sonnenberg) and other authors such as Leatherbarrow and Pallasmaa and looking to films such as *Into Great Silence* and *Wings of Desire* as part of the seminar component of the class.

The first short project used memory as a way of starting with personal experience as a guiding constraint. The primary project investigated the contemporary ‘asylum/refuge/sanctuary’ as defined by the student. Students were defined relationships between the institution and the individual, and applied methods, theories and research explored earlier in the semester to the scale of a small building. The final project included the design of all support functions on a specific site.

Water was introduced as a medium and issues of publicity and privacy, boundary, threshold and bodily sensation and spatial phenomena were examined. Students examined access and confinement- the explicit or implied ability to cross a physical or notional boundary -and separation. All of this in the pursuit of degrees of intimacy- a property or value used to calibrate spatial zones and their thresholds.

Each discreet project was interconnected by the student as part of their personal concern, with materiality and construction added as an integral concern. Analysis, evaluation and means of reporting and revealing information included extensive descriptive studies done in drawing, photographs, models and other media, both virtual and physical. Students examined design values within issues concerning psychology, sociology, materiality, technology and construction and the way they shape and make architectural form.
HOUSING HOMELESS FAMILIES

Dining Room | Chapel
Blake Naumann

Upward Mobility: Approximately 34% of Austin's homeless population is chronically homeless, which means they are constantly unhoused and unable to support themselves without assistance. Once an individual becomes homeless, they are likely to follow a divergent path from that of regular society, taking them further and further into isolation. Chronically homeless individuals are uncomfortable around other members of society, and members of society are not comfortable around chronically homeless. Both often go to great lengths to avoid the other.

According to the Erikson model of development, psychosocial development happens as the natural result of successful relationships. The purpose of Street Eats is to provide a safe environment for both chronically homeless and regular individuals to engage socially as well as economically. By participating in Street Eats, the homeless receive a portable shelter and work their way through a program which teaches them social skills, personal hygiene, initiative, and basic business skills. Street Eats provides not only a temporary shelter, but also a means of re-entering society as a functioning individual.

AUSTIN GIRLS’ SHELTER
Blake Naumann

Safety & Autonomy: According to the International Justice Mission, 27 million children, women and men are enslaved now, more than any other time in history. Of the estimated 100,000 individuals who live in slavery in the United States, 20% pass through Texas.

A shelter for human trafficking victims requires an environment that both provides a sense of safety as well as encourages its residents to work towards independence. According to psychologists who have worked with these women and girls, their psychological development freezes at the first episode of abuse. The lack of psychological development has significant implications in terms of the way girls interact with and understand the world around them. In addition to a stunted psychological development, girls’ abuse and trauma leads them to fear autonomy and making decisions for themselves. They are taught to live in submission, accepting what they are given without expressing their opinions. A successful shelter meets the immediate needs of the girls while helping them understand their value and ability to create beauty.

COMMUNITY LIBRARY
Russell Beamond

Openness: Initial investigations studied the qualities of successful libraries and successful chapels. This research found that successful libraries generally have large open spaces, bright lighting, limited connection to the outside, and both unfocused and individual seating. Chapels generally have natural materials, ornamentation, sculpted light, mystical atmospheres, a control of surround- ings, focused seating, and symmetry.

A community space that functions as a library and chapel must successfully combine these qualities without diminishing the power that they create. The resulting space is open yet controlled, light yet firm, organized yet not restrictive. Materials are carefully selected and taken advantage of. The strength and solidity of the cast concrete foundation walls lends to a sense of permanence and security. The delicate and sculptural quality of the wood covering, on the other hand, provides a playfulness and sense of hope to the space.
Teaching: Graduate Architectural Design Studio

ASYLUM/REFUGE/SANCTUARY - BUILDING AS CURE: ARCHITECTURE FOR MENTAL HEALTH/ILLNESS

Poster Session Presentation
99th ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE SCHOOLS OF ARCHITECTURE
MONTREAL, CANADA, 2011

Alain de Botton in The Architecture of Happiness states, “Belief in the significance of architecture is premised on the notion that we are for better or worse, different people in different places - and on the conviction that it is architecture’s task to render vivid to us who we might ideally be.” The exploration of how current approaches to psychiatric treatment and contemporary architectural expression affect our understanding of mental illness and its impact on culture continues. As we look forward, we ask: What is architecture’s future role in the dialogue between patient and society and how will buildings both manifest and nurture our ideal selves? The word asylum’s original usage is defined as “refuge and sanctuary” and is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “a benevolent institution offering shelter and support.” As both building type and institution, the asylum and its successor, the psychiatric hospital, mediate between the individual and society.

This graduate design studio examined two disparate arenas: that of architecture—the outer, material world of tangible places—and that of psychology—the inner world, the realm of the human mind. Connections between the two can be poetically elusive and obscure. Specific historic and contemporary case studies of architectural environments designed for treating the mentally ill reveal insight into our fundamental ideas of what architecture is, and can be, and what our understanding of mental illness and health is, or could be. Architecture is both container of and medium for health, creating a therapeutic environment that participates in the healing process. Introspection and reflection are both subject of and method for design.

Through a series of readings and exercises that examine specific, fundamental issues of mental health, the studio undertook design exercises at a range of scales, beginning with the examination of historic and current precedents. The first project was the design for a particular space in which therapy (an analysis) takes place. Major concerns were issues of separation and levels of controlled access and contact between the interior and exterior. A short second project examined the potential of water as the medium for therapeutic healing. Issues of publicity and privacy, boundary and threshold, as well as bodily sensation and spatial phenomena were examined.

Students also explored the marriage of the experiential and physical to the psychological.

The final project investigated the contemporary ‘asylum’ where the mentally ill are treated in wellness/treatment center. Students defined the relationship between the institution and the individual; the therapist and the patient; and the city and the building. They addressed concepts of access and confinement—the explicit or implicit ability to cross a physical or notional boundary—and separation—a physical or conceptual boundary between elements that emphasizes their differences. Students worked with practicing members of the psychiatric and psychoanalytic care community through a series of projects. The practitioners presented case studies to the students, met with them individually, and attended the design presentations.
Teaching: Advanced Architectural Design Studio

BUILDING AS HOPE: ARCHITECTURE AND THE IDEAL SELF
Lecture - International Conference
ARCHITECTURE LIVE PROJECTS PEDAGOGY SYMPOSIUM
OXFORD, ENGLAND 2012

Co-taught by Danze and Stephen Sonnenberg, M.D., this graduate design studio utilized psychoanalytic developmental sensibilities in examining and connecting the realms of architecture—the outer, material world of tangible places—and psychology—the inner world of the human mind.

While in college in 1968, Bill Strickland founded the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild to bring arts education and mentoring to inner city youth in his neighborhood. Today this organization serves public school students as well as adults in transition by offering courses in ceramics, design, digital and photography studios and more recently the culinary arts and sciences. Strickland’s psychoanalytically oriented approach influences the way the program integrates art, architecture, and psychology. His philosophy is simple: The environment shapes people’s lives. By constructing an empowering atmosphere of art, light, and music and guided by staff that strive to realize the genius in everyone, the program enables its students to become productive contributors to society.

The primary project was the design of a multi-disciplinary arts and learning center that fosters a sense of belonging, interconnectedness, and hope within the urban community. The studio directly involved Bill Strickland, president and CEO of Manchester Bidwell and the National Center for Arts and Technology and members of his staff as clients and colleagues. Strickland, a MacArthur Fellowship recipient, has most recently been appointed by President Obama to his White House Council for Community Solutions. Students explored the program, investigated and discussed the client/architect relationship, identified potential sites for locating a facility, and designed a prototype infused with personal and community motivation.
The studio posed and explored questions from an analytical and psychoanalytic point of view, defining the relationship between the institution and the individual, between artist and the medium, between the city and the building. The psychoanalyst/architect team helped students understand psychoanalytic principles by assisting with self-observation and discussing readings on the relationship between architecture and psychoanalysis. A goal of the studio was to help students recognize how growth is plastic, and how the design process promotes growth in the designer, even as it creates an environment that encourages growth in the users of a new space or building. Like many architectural design projects the challenge to the designer is to understand what the users of the building require, and to empathize with the user. The studio work engaged inquiry of two concerns: the identity and use of an educational institution as embodied in its physical environment based on psychoanalytic principles, and psychoanalytic developmental sensibilities—including self-observation—in both the user and designer.

Architecture was considered the container of, and medium for, personal empowerment, freedom and growth. The goal was to create an environment where the architecture participates in and promotes this process. Similarly, introspection and reflection were both subject of, and method for, design. Students studied projects that operated as primary participant in providing well-being, awareness and growth of the individual.

The initial phase of the project involved looking simultaneously at both the large and small scale. Specifically, this involved analysis, evaluation, and response to an existing building, as well as the design of a series of short, interconnected exercises examining specific elements of the building as a way to initiate the building design. The first of these involved the design of a pottery studio, the second a gallery for the display of artwork. Students examined the intentions for making building form through a series of analyses, typological precedents, programmatic organizations, and formal composition of individual and multi-unit spaces. Issues of publicity and privacy, boundary, threshold, bodily sensation and spatial phenomena were examined as well as the marriage of the experiential and physical to the psychological.
It’s well-established that the built environment can affect a person’s emotional state. On one end of the spectrum, fast-food restaurants exemplify this idea, with purposefully designed interiors where harsh colors and lighting subtly encourage a rapid turnaround of customers.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are spaces intentionally imbued with a sense of calm, places in which occupants may feel removed from everyday distractions and involuntarily moved toward self-reflection. There is Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute or Alvar Aalto’s Paimio Sanatorium, both designed by AIA Gold Medalists and celebrated as architectural masterworks that help reinforce the connection between meditative space and superlative design. Indeed, architecture’s psychological affect can be profound. Yet only within the last few years has its impact been the subject of detailed academic study.

Design psychology in action

Having spent many years researching the connection between architecture and psychology, Danze seeks opportunities to apply her research findings to her architectural work for Danze Blood Architects, the firm she leads with Blood, her husband. Their most recent project, a parking garage in Austin for T3, an advertising and integrated marketing firm, proved to be an ideal case.

The helical concrete structure organizes its four parking levels around a central elliptical light well. On the steel screens attached to its exterior, vines grow and soften the sometimes intense sunshine. The garage’s open structure allows ample air to circulate within. The T3 Parking Structure received a 2013 Design Award from the Texas Society of Architects as well as an Honor Award last year from AIA Austin. Jurors in both competitions recognized the project as commendable for reimagining a building type that seldom transcends the mundane.

“The garage is designed so that the users have a pleasurable and enriching experience as they arrive and leave the garage every day on their way to and from work,” Danze says. “Unlike most parking garages—anonymous, utilitarian structures that are frequently dark and unpleasant places to be—the hope here is that the regular routine of arriving at work is both visually and spatially engaging and inspiring. The open structure lets in ample light, which is filtered through plantings, casting dappled light patterns through the space. The multi-floor parking is configured in a continuous helical ramp—the simple act of arrival evokes a positive and literally elevating phenomenological experience as the sense of movement is heightened.”

Awards

- 2014 International Parking Institute Awards of Excellence
- 2014 Architizer A+ Awards, finalist
- 2013 Texas Society of Architects Design Award
- 2013 AIA Austin Honor Award
TWIN VALLEY HOUSE
DANZE BLOOD ARCHITECTS, AUSTIN, TEXAS 2002
(Subject of Commonalities, “Bridging the Gap: Architecture and Psychoanalysis” and “Psychoanalysis and Architecture,” The Muriel Gardiner Program in Psychoanalysis and the Humanities)

Awards
2005 American Institute of Architects, Small Projects Practitioners Knowledge Community Design Award
2005 Merit Award, Custom Home
2004 AIA Austin Honor Award

Select Publications
“Twin Valley House,” Architectural Record, House of the Month, Jan. 2006
“Texas, Residence,” Custom Home, Sep/Oct 2005
“Working Together,” Eco-Structure, Jul/Aug 2005
“Pivotal Decision,” Custom Home, Nov/Dec 2004
“Wide Open Space,” Austin Monthly, Sept. 2004
“Schematic: Cat Mountain View,” Tribeza, Oct. 2003
Excerpt of Foreword by Elizabeth Danze

Sebastian Zimmermann’s photographs introduce us to a wide range of psychotherapists and convey a compelling combination of intimacy and connection with their subjects. Simultaneously revealing and enigmatic, they are a testament to both Zimmermann’s talent as a photographer and his insight as an analyst and observer. The photographs provide a glimpse into a world most of us do not often see or truly understand. These are not public spaces, they are intensely intimate and personal, and each enables a world that remains distinctly private. But, through Zimmermann’s images, we feel a sense of connection with the analyst and, in viewing these photographs, we can easily imagine stepping into the role of the patient.

Set in each analyst’s office, these portraits illuminate the personalities of the subjects they portray. Diversely occupied with personal objects belonging to each, these settings are as varied as their subjects. What do the objects in the room tell us about the person who chose them? The smallest detail—whether an aspect of the room or an object within the room—can serve as a gateway to another world. Likewise, the smallest of observations, magnified, enables the possibility of seeing what was not there before.

During the process of therapy, these objects provide potent opportunities for association. Perhaps the patient’s memories, feelings, and thoughts are laid out similarly to the items in the room, to be mentally scrutinized, contemplated and reconstructed. Pieces of art, as well as ambiguous objects are invitations to dream and imagine. The items are conveyors and representations of imagination: first the imagination of the maker, and then the imagination of the viewers. For the patient, there is the purity that these objects hold, having no previously known specific and no personal story attached; they are ripe for symbolic interpretation. The objects and pictures are blurred of their original meaning. They hold great potential for provocation, but at the same time might be seen as emptied and mute—a void waiting to be filled.

As an architect, I have long been fascinated by this sanctum. I consider the role of the room neither tacit nor passive, but rather active in the creative work of analysis. It is an amalgamation of office, examination room, confessional, and nest. Each room conveys a sense of sanctuary, protection, and safety, but it need not be neutral or inactive. It may advocate for, and even provoke, introspection, awareness, and growth, as well as be a supportive participant in the therapy that occurs within its walls.

The personal transformation that occurs through psychotherapeutic work is as charged as the site where this exchange occurs. No other type of architectural space performs in quite the same way. These rooms are detached floating vessels, places of sanctuary and protection, healing and reconciliation. They are shaped by space, material, texture, and light to elucidate the characters and stories that reside within.
This lecture drew on interdisciplinary research to examine how the allied fields of psychoanalysis and psychology might inform – and possibly transform – thinking of architecture and design. What do we know of the built environment’s effect on the physical and mental well-being of its users? How does what architects design influence the psychology of the people who interact with their buildings? The session explored key ideas and concepts connecting the relationship between the physical design of space and its effects on mental health and well-being through case studies and projects at the scale of the individual, the building and the city.