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## Places

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## Muse of the Heart and Mind

It has always been interesting to me that popular descriptions of Charles W. Moore's work are dominated by adjectives like "playful" and "whimsical." In a paradoxical way, Moore's inimitable lightness of touch was made possible by his deep formalism. This formalism was exemplified in his work by his masterful control of space. Moore's spaces are much more than volume given shape by a container; they are muscular forces whose strength is emphasized by the contrast of their lyrical adornment — the effect is as visceral as that of Hercules dressed up in Omphale's peignoir.

In an almost perverse way, Moore loved restrictions. I worked with Charles and Centerbrook on the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College. I can't think of a more difficult context within which to create a new architectural form than the Hood Museum site, which had been sort of a dog run closely bounded on one corner by the campus heating plant, which fortunately resembled a New England mill building; on another by the neo-Romanesque Wilson Hall designed by the nineteenth-century architect Sylvanus Thayer; and on another by Wallace K. Harrison's great, lumbering Hopkins Center for the Performing Arts.

One of my more vivid memories from that time is accompanying Charles on a tour of the project for a group of donors, almost all of whom were dedicated Dartmouth alumni who loved their campus. Quirky, charming Wilson Hall was easy to love. But what, I wondered, would Charles say about the Hopkins Center? "I feel about Harrison and Thayer like a kid might feel about his father and grandfather," Charles began. "I have my problems with Harrison; but I think Thayer is just wonderful." Of course! No need for angst — it's all just generational.

But I believe Charles liked having to work through his problems with Harrison. Having to

grapple with the difficult physical reality of a place really got his creative juices flowing. In *The Unsettling of America*, Wendell Berry wrote: *There are, it seems, two Muses: the Muse of Inspiration, who gives us inarticulate visions and desires, and the Muse of Realization, who returns again and again to say, "It is yet more difficult than you thought." This is the muse of form. . . . It may be . . . that form serves us best when it works as an obstruction to baffle us and deflect our intended course. The impeded stream is the one that sings.*

I thought of Charles when I read those words, of how he thrived on formal challenges and of his generosity when some problem arose or a client changed his mind and Charles got to do it again. He knew that he would somehow do it better, doing it again. This quality was not patience, though Charles could be very patient. It was more an expression of his childlike, or perhaps Zen, attitude toward life. Everything Charles did, he did for the first time. It is this quality that I attempt to emulate in my own work, work that is quite different from Charles's. Nevertheless, in an odd way, he was my most important mentor.

I wonder whether, in thinking about the letter format of *Chambers for a Memory Palace*, Charles ever thought of the Epistles of Saint Paul. I wouldn't put it past him. The book brings to mind a passage from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians: "You are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ... written not with ink but by the Spirit, ... not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart." Good architecture, like all good work, comes from the heart. That is the real legacy of Charles W. Moore.