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Author

Lyndon, Donlyn

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Caring About P L A C E S

With this issue we begin a new venture. Our new publisher, the Design History Foundation, will help us extend our reach to a larger audience while continuing our editorial commitments: to consider how places enter people's lives, to explore the means through which places are imagined and represented, to prompt discussion regarding the character of public environments, to nurture interest in the ways that people can care about places and contribute to their making.

In one sense *Places* is a journal that refuses to accept its place. We could have an easier time of it by targeting a professional group and playing to its interests, finding a niche and being careful not to stray too far afield. Should we focus on architecture, geography, social factors, public policy, environmental art, history, gardening? None of these alone will do. Places are inherently complex; they cannot be grasped from a single vantage point.

Our purpose is to confront this diversity and to make it the touchstone of our enterprise. We shall, however, consistently attend to certain things.

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We shall always be interested in configuration. How does the specific shape of a place condition its use? What aspect of it sticks in the mind? What network of dimensions measures our relation to its parts?

Good places are memorable. They have recognizable forms that make it easy for us to think about them. Ideas adhere to things that are distinct.

We shall always be interested in how places sustain attention over time. What brings people back to a street, a square, or a shaded glen? How do the characteristics of a place invite and reward exploration, encouraging each user to construct individual experience within the common frame?

Good places embody thought, thought that can be retraced by the observer, yielding insights that surprise or confirming patterns of common understanding.

We shall always be interested in how people interact with a place. What opportunities does its physical structure afford those who use it? What makes it nice to move through a place? Where do people enjoy resting? How do different people respond to a place and to each other?

Good places are open to improvisation. They encourage imaginative use. Good places make people

feel that they belong, that they have a stake in the world that they share with others.

We shall always be interested in how places come about. How does a group of buildings or a landscape develop over time; what are the elements, what processes are reflected in their forms?

Above all, good places embody care. In all its forms imaginative care must be cherished; it has the capacity to transform matter into spirit, solitude into community, space into place.

Join us in making *Places* be good. We need your comments and suggestions, your manuscripts and images. Argue with us, show us new ways to care, and help us construct new vantage points that are equal to the task.

—Donlyn Lyndon