

# UC Berkeley

## Places

### Title

Architecture [Caring about Places]

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3979p1bz>

### Journal

Places, 1(4)

### ISSN

0731-0455

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### Publication Date

1984-04-01

Peer reviewed

## Caring about Places: Architecture

Architecture, the deliberately made physical structure of place, creates opportunities for people to position themselves in space, in time, and in the order of things.

To choose one's position in space is one of the continuing ubiquitous pleasures in life, a pleasure that we seek instinctively throughout the day. To be next to something (someone), to be above or below, behind or in front, inside or outside, are existential conditions that give distinct qualities to our actions. To look out over, to shelter within, to rest against, to stand up to and to face directly are actions we can imagine, actions with generic significance that we all understand. To be able to choose among such conditions is part of being able to be human. We should imbue our buildings and landscapes with occasions for choice. Functionalism and determinism, not modernism, prescribe specific limited actions in a building—for whatever good or evil purposes—and deny, thereby, the expressive potential of relationships between people and things.

Of course we do more in a building, in life, than stand about. Architecture, properly done, enables us to reflect upon our position, to imagine our relationship to the building, not just to act it out, and to see the acts of others reflected in a building's form. Architecture has the capacity to nurture our attention, to bring things to mind, to strike associations, and to reward curiosity. Architecture gives us places to inhabit, to make a part of our lives.

To take position is a figure of speech used more often with ideas than with

things. We “take position” on the issues of the day, align ourselves for or against the large scale forces and purposes of society. Architects and architecture do that, too. And we should do it deliberately. How our buildings provide choice for people, what attentions they nurture, whom they serve, and to whom they can belong, are cultural and political questions of consequence. The positions we take on those questions are embedded in the places we build and give rise to their form. We consider it necessary for architecture to bring attention to people and to place: to make places that are filled with opportunities to choose, that are visibly related to human actions, that sustain detailed attention, that can belong to those who use them, and that are related always to the larger place of which they form a part.



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