

THOMAS D. CHURCH AND ASSOCIATES
L A N D S C A P E A R C H I T E C T S
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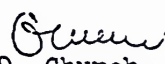
Re: Santa Cruz

Dear Jack:

The enclosed notes were written in the plane coming home. If it makes no sense, blame it on the 33,000 feet we had to fly to get over a storm.

I'm looking forward to our next meeting.

Sincerely,


Thomas D. Church

TDC/hp

Encl: (1)
cc & encl to Mr. John Carl Warnecke

NOV 1 1962

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10-29-62

University of California at Santa Cruz

Random Notes on the Site:

Among all the natural features which make the site both provocative and difficult, it is the size of the redwood groves which must concern us the most. These towers of trees are "out-scale" and more related to the rugged knolls and deep ravines than they are to an academic landscape. They are, therefore, to be thought of less as trees to enhance, screen and shelter buildings (although this they will do), but more as great vertical elements of the topography having form, mass and density against which to compose the architecture. The problem is more like building at the foot of cliffs or in the Pinnacles National Monument.

To accept them as trees in the normal building-landscape relationship would be a miscalculation of their potential in the grand design. Trees, as we have known them, are there in the oaks, madrones, pines and bays.

This influence of the great trees on the site plan and the architecture and the search for form to compliment them becomes an immediate challenge to the architects, for I know no past examples where a comparable site and program have been successfully

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Random Notes on the Site (continued)

solved. (The forest at Ankor Vat came after the fact). To be influenced by current examples of building in the Redwoods (the Sequoia cabin, the ski hut, Camp Curry, Bohemian Grove) might lead into pleasant but innocuous solutions suitable only for lesser and more sentimental projects.

Further, it is important to think clearly and with imagination before accepting the standards and cliches of modern monumental, or normal campus, building types. An architecture here must grow out of the problems, restrictions and potentialities of the site. Usual relationships of building groups in a formal pattern may violate the topography beyond repair. Grading and reforming of the land there will be, but kept to a minimum. Tree-clearing will be inevitable, not because the architecture forces it, but because the ultimate landscape demands it. There will be no indiscriminate removal of major redwood groves to accomodate preconceived architectural schemes. To a greater extent than any of us have faced heretofor, the buildings are less important in the visual composition than the trees. Instead of remaking the land, the land must remake our standard conceptions of building and plaza and parking lot.

The past is not without monumental examples of man having built with a full realization of the grandeur of his site and a knowledge of how to build to enhance or glorify it, as well as meet a specific program. The pyramids, the Greek temples, medieval castles, Tibetan monasteries and gothic spires attest to this.

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Reverse examples are also plentiful. If the Victor Emanuel Monument is too obvious, consider the man who dared plunge the Campanile into the Piazzo San Marco. Contrast the serenity of the domed cyclatron in the Berkeley hills to some of the more recent buildings being erected there. Look what happened to the Golden Triangle in Pittsburg -- one of the most talked of sites in the country ten years ago. How could anyone have crowded Wright's Museum into a block of dull buildings when light and air and trees were just across the street? The University of Mexico may be controversial but courage was not lacking.

It would be foolish and highly undesirable to think that a new startling architecture will appear here. Any attempt of a designer to compete in grandeur with this site is doomed to failure. Since the site is going to win, in any case, it's possible that the twin theories of delicate contrast and protective coloring are most likely to succeed. Hence color and texture will be as important as form. The strong horizontal, the dome, the gable may all find their place here. Bridges, wide cantilevers, sudden departures from the rectangular plan -- cliches on a flat site -- will become logical outgrowths of the siting problems.

It must be kept in mind, to avoid future recrimination, that one of the inevitable results of building in a forest is that as man enters, nature recedes. Romantics must be warned that covers of fern, johnny jump-ups and shooting stars prefer to disappear

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Random Notes on the Site (continued)

rather than face our advanced civilization. With the exception of areas especially preserved in their natural state the general effect in the main campus areas must be one of sensitive collaboration between the designer and this spectacular environment with the intent that neither shall impose unduly upon the other. The wall to wall forest carpet will disappear and in its place must come -- not the asphalt jungle, not the standard campus we have always known, not an automobile under every redwood -- but a vast area in which to live and study. It must be magnificent in conception, daring and forthright in its architecture -- but gentle be the hand it lays upon the land.

TDC/hp