

Explore Lab 33

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The Intimacy of Intensive Places

presence of place in the villages of the Lower Engadine

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Discussion and reflection

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We live in a period where building physics and associated topics have such a significant impact on building design and expression that buildings from the 1960s or the Palladian era are no longer comparable with those of today. The buildings and the craftsmen's tasks were simpler back then. We no longer construct from the interior to the outside and from the outside to the inside because we must deal with different issues now. Additional questions like these generate a rift, rendering them uninteresting in the public space because they lack the sensuality, shape, and attention to detail that the eye requires. If we don't want to lose the craft of construction, we can argue that we need to rediscover our trade; a step back to take a leap forward.

One must position oneself as a member of society. You must cultivate and maintain an attitude toward society and the future. Our goal for the future is to continue to improve on what already exists. It takes time, practice, and some historical knowledge to build effective criteria for these kind of queries. Architecture can be thought of as a form of construction art. It's a very tangible work, constructed from real objects that are in direct dialogue with the environment. We go to places in our line of work to get a sense of the place, to see and feel it, and to get an idea of how we could react to it. We see new things every day. New people, locations, situations, cultures, and traditions are all observed. We've all read books, seen movies, listened to music, traveled around the world, spoken with people from many walks of life and shared ideas with one another. All of these things combined make us who and what we are. They serve as incubators for new ideas. When you work in the creative field, everything you do is connected to who you are. We are a part of the past. A thread of life populated by objects, things or human acts. It explains where we came from and how we can move forward. To understand the people inhabiting places as an outsider is challenging. It's more difficult to understand what they mean when they say something like this or like that. Understanding the physical locations themselves is less problematic. It is an act that everyone can complete if they are able to take their time, be patient, and develop the ability to behold. To construct a method of seeing at the location, one looks at the landscape, terrain, buildings, materials, breathes in the air, and listens to the sounds. Then there's the creation of an interior image. We can naturally react, imagine, and envision genuine locations before they are built as a result of this. It's about observing a location and imagining how one may react to it.

Doing so means to immerse oneself in it, explaining and documenting what is on and underneath those surfaces. In most cases, the history of such places may be found on paper. I would state that history doesn't just happen when one has a source from which to draw information. Words on paper are just that: words on paper. They *describe* the tangible object. Especially in the case of architecture, a physical art of construction, the object itself is lost and, regrettably, becomes an academic history.

Rather, I'd vow to approach places largely through their physical history, which is preserved in the objects themselves like has been the case with the context for this research. The place where a building stands is always a historic place whose traces of history are stored in the topography, the village, a townscape, a city or in the landscape. The newly constructed thing begins to resonate and becomes more valuable as a result of its connection to these kinds of histories than it would be if it stood alone. It's lot easier to be successful with the new things you add if one can work with things that already exist and have a history. By connecting, it forms a holistic atmosphere.

This research was a first attempt at understanding a new location as an outsider by fully immersing oneself in the environment. The proposed research approach and methods were a direct response to academic dogma surrounding architectural typologies and locations study. The act of repetition has been put on a pedestal allowing it to become the primary viewpoint for the researched location. Through this methodology it was possible to capture the physicality of the sites allowing for the observation of minor shifts, variances and nuances in their intensities.

Categorising a versatility of research methods gave way to focus on different elements that revealed themselves during the initial site visit. It was evident from the start that the study would not end up being a catalog or toolbox of research methods. Each site is unique and necessitates a distinct approach of observation. The fundamental goal of this research approach was to train oneself and become familiar with the location. The open structure of methods also allowed room for exploration on the site and flexibility of experiments. Ironically, putting thoughts on paper in the form of poetry has proven to be an effective way of comprehending and making sense of the entire situation. Poetry is of course no academic or technical description for observations. Rather

it's an intuitive way of dealing with what the beholder sees or feels and how one tries to capture that essence in words.

Instead of promoting a specific goal, Explore Lab allows students to focus on their personal interests. During prior studio sessions and workshops I attended, which were mostly in the department of Form & Modelling studies, I had a similar sense of liberation. Their techniques were frequently directed toward architectural composition and perception, with a focus on the research, visualisation, and explanation of basic phenomena using physical models. Throughout the master's program, a recurring theme was the study of proportional systems, scales, and material assemblage. This project takes on these multiple scales and sensitivities of the landscape in a similar fashion and tries to add to the idea of the model as a functioning research tool. I was able to follow my interests thanks to Explore Lab's platform and the help and advice of my teachers. This graduating year was the first time I was able to go my own way without being shackled, but rather being allowed to put my personal framework into action, which was the result of many years of practicing, learning, making and thinking.

With that said, this research could also be seen as one large, comprehensive site study that provides the minimal conditions and knowledge one should know before a suitable design proposal can be put on paper. I'll be honest and state that I set out with the intention of creating a design for a location in or near the villages of a specific valley in the Lower Engadine. The precise site would emerge while conducting the research itself, which it fortunately did in the end. Most importantly, it was more enjoyable for me to conduct a highly physical investigation using site visits, models, and drawings rather than a more standard literary research method. More philosophical and poetical essays helped to bridge the gap between the two sorts of inquiry, thereby justifying my efforts in some ways. This resulted in a wide range of knowledge related to the architecture and topography of the villages. Structuring this in one complete story sometime proved to be difficult. I have a tendency of explaining everything, which is not always necessary. With the guiding of my mentor it was nevertheless possible to order the different results while still retaining its layering.

My personal framework, which served as the foundation for the research, has evolved over time and will continue to do so in the years and experiences to come. As an architect,

I believe it is crucial to be able to determine which language best suits oneself. One can express a sense of life through buildings, paintings, music, and other mediums. Through careful consideration of location, methods, approaches, and documentation, I learned how to explore these concepts.

Through this research the step towards a design proposal could be made. Two locations were chosen based on the findings and understanding of the locations. An addendum in the form of holding a lecture at the Fundaziun Nairs in Switzerland after this final portion of the graduation time might be an intriguing closing point of the graduation year in which the results are discussed in their direct context alongside its inhabitants. Throughout the conducted research it was possible to, in a brief window of time, fathom the essence and intensity of the valley and its different villages. Simultaneously, it became evident that spending more time in the presence of the population is necessary to properly comprehend their cultural past and habits. This would further solidify the knowledge of the location and improve the positioning of a potential design. Additionally further research into local arts, music, poetry and vernacular building types could be conducted. It would not only provide nourishment for the researcher and serve as a token of appreciation for the residents of these communities, but it might also start a debate among the valley's residents. An outsider's perspective can elicit new sensations or concepts that are relevant to the communities' future growth.

