Reducing Our Task:
Humanity, Domesticity, and Place in Stephen Atkinson's Zachary House

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INTRODUCTION: HUMANITY AND ARCHITECTURE

So long as we do not see ourselves as orphans, divided from the world and other people, and as long as we acknowledge the inherent relation between all humanity and all things, our life in this world is all that is necessary to be guaranteed of eternal meaning. The miracle of life set against the temporal limits of a mortal body, mind, and spirit define the plight and station held by human beings within God's limitless cosmos. By means of our physical frame, we stand upright — feet against the earth, eyes fixed toward the horizon — and we apprehend ourselves in the world. So as to live beyond mere survival, by our labors, we fashion a place for ourselves within the world, a microcosm within a greater cosmos.

Our lives pass between land and sky. Within this thin strata, our existence vacillates across the gross extremes of physical phenomena: between the brilliance of day and dark of night, the heat of summer and the cold of winter, the highlands of mountains and the lowlands of valleys, between barren earth and lush abundance. The Greek thinker Heraclitus saw all phenomena as flux, transformation, or scales of change on an ever sliding continuum: birth to death, light to dark, day to night, whole to divisible, open to closed, ascension to declination, inward to outward, wet to dry, movement to rest, hunger to satiety, natural to cultural, number to interval.[1] By means of our human understanding, we bisect the phenomena of the world into counterpoised opposites: cosmic antonyms. We perceive *infinite phenomena* within a *finite range* of contrasted experiences. Humanity inhabits the gap between these *perceived* extremes; we live not so much *in the world as it is* but we live in a world transfigured by our perceptions (hot/cold, high/low, barren/lush). In this simple way, we make the world *humane to ourselves* . . . and therefore, crassly supposed, we do not live in the world so much as we fabricate places within a domain *mediated by our perceptions* of the world.

Present day attitudes suggest that the meaning behind architecture extends from *unexpressed* aspects of culture that influence building, implicit conditions of: politics, art, philosophy, science, etc. . . In fact, we have been trained by our current era to look to the meaning of architecture in human activities *external* of architecture's fundamental making. Counter to this trend, Stephen Atkinson's Zachary House points back to the conditions *explicit* to building. The Zachary House's appeal extends from its very connectedness to the traditional building arts. The Zachary House points to *two* explicit conditions that bring it into being: the landscape in which it exists and the human life it encloses. It is simply a refined expression of shelter for human life set against the world. Because of this simplicity, the Zachary House invokes something greater — a **microcosm**, a *little world within a greater world* is formed; a place that mirrors our humanity within a greater cosmos.[2]

Though spare and simple, Atkinson's Zachary House in not a primitive dwelling, nor an imitation of Laugier's Primitive Hut.[3] Nonetheless, Atkinson's architecture is reducible to classifiable building elements. The elements of Atkinson's architecture appeal to us because they are without pretense. But as a form or a space approaches this level of initial simplicity, it consequentially opens itself up to an unexpected depth of meaning which draws to itself unforeseeable associations.

The elements that make up Atkinson's Zachary House are bound to circumstance and are not universal in application; they are *reductions* that serve to rarify a place and bring into being an emotional attachment to a locale, tinged with nostalgia. The Zachary House, like any good example of architecture, serves as an intercession between culture and nature; and thereby evokes all the potential meanings that arise when human culture emerges from a place.

The house is not named for the owners but is named for the place it occupies.[4] It is a possession of the locale. Its meanings are without reference, except to those things that point *inward* to the conditions of its existence: a spare expression of a place in the world that reflects our humanity.

Atkinson's work becomes a point of emotional resonance, a simple composed figure on the land that opens up to a multivalence of meaning. He composes singular elements, distinctly ordered and proportioned so that when drawn together in concert they compose an interplay that resonates with greater meaning.[5] As a composition, the Zachary House is complete; each element is attuned with the other. What connects Atkinson's work to the whole of architecture are simple built decisions that represent human insight as to our place in the world; thereby pointing to the primordial act of fabricating a human realm within the awesome beauties and perils of its landscape.

DOMESTIC ELEMENTS

> ''Between sowing and begetting, harvest and death, the child and the grain, a profound affinity is set up . . . And as completed expression of this life feeling, we find everywhere the symbolic shape of the farmhouse, which in the disposition of the rooms and in every line of external form tells us about the blood of its inhabitants. The peasant's dwelling is the great symbol of settledness. . . The kindly spirits of hearth and door, floor and chamber — Vesta, Janus, Lares, and Penates — are as firmly fixed in it as the man himself. . . This is the condition precedent of every Culture, which in itself grows up out of a mother-landscape and renews and intensifies the intimacy of man and soil.''[6]

The Zachary house can be reduced to four domestic elements as the quote above by Oswald Spenger suggests; each reflects the domestic deities, the spirits of home, and thus become symbolic of settlement within a once hostile landscape. These symbols dwell within the Atkinson's primary elements as though it were an invocation of spirit. Stephen Atkinson creates an *index for dwelling* that points to human aspiration within the world.[7] The four primary elements of the Zachary House are as such: Chimney/Hearth/Stoop, Deck/Platform, Roof/Walls/Room, and Void Room/Vestibule.[8]

CHIMNEY/HEARTH/STOOP

By making the hearth (considered the archetypal element of tribal and familial place-making) into a point of entry and departure — in fact *loosening* the hearth from its customary central and practical place and relocating it at the periphery — Atkinson transforms it to something symbolic.[9] As an element, it redirects the purpose of the retreat from physical satiety to spiritual contemplation. By this architectural act, Atkinson moves toward the essence of the *retreat*: a place *outside* the world where we contemplate our place *within* the world.

The hearth and chimney is integrated with an adeptly fashioned stoop. The entry stoop's subtle offset between the edge of the building and its indention into the deck/platform, significantly interrupts the continuity of the deck. The ebb and flow of the stoop suggests its appropriateness as an entry configuration. Atkinson makes the steps which lead from ground to platform jointed and articulate so as to bring into being the transitional experiences of welcoming and departing. The top step shares the same level with the hearth; the brick of the top tread becomes the same brick of the hearth.[10] Atkinson combines entry and departure with the hearth. He invokes the ancient Italian goddess *Vesta*, daughter of Saturn and Ops, goddess of the hearth, and more especially of the fire on the hearth. In her temple the Vestal virgins maintained a perpetual fire, so essential to both human dwelling and dominion over the land.

Atkinson economizes his use of masonry by integrating the components of stoop, hearth, and chimney into a single element. By necessity, each of these components is earthbound — by its very nature the stoop delivers us to and from the ground; and by sheer weight and mass of hearth and chimney, bears directly to the ground. Construction with masonry carries with it associative meanings: stacked units, mortar, stratification, fired earth, solidity, weightiness, longevity, and inert resistance to consumption in fire.

DECK/PLATFORM

Upon ascending the masonry stoop, our feet encounter a platform whose spatial orientation runs counter-grain to the living chambers. The platform is level with the interior flooring and in this way, regardless of the material change, forms a continuous flow between inside and outside.

The Zachary House uses a conventional foundation and thereby raises the platform above the land. As with much of the construction in Louisiana and throughout the Southeastern United States, dwellings are built on a 'pier and sill' foundation; this raises the living space above the earth's grade, forming a crawlspace below. The platform, raised above the land, separates the retreat from its surroundings; overlapping the extensive natural landscape with a humanized place.

The construction of a platform is first initiated by creating a *clearing*; a place distinguished from nature — a place cleared by human hands and made open to human eyes. Thus the platform becomes a *place of action* — indicative of human activity *taking place*. All recognized places are in fact, places of human action. The recognition of a place as distinct from its surroundings is to sense the presence of the *Lares*, ancient Roman domestic deities, the presiders and protectors of a particular locale — associated with a place's *genius loci*. Constructing a platform, like making a clearing, frees a place from its surroundings and makes it ready for human settlement.[11] 'Taking place' implies the simultaneity of *action* and the *revelation of place*; constituting the overlap between *place* and *human activity*.

The platform stretches into the landscape, leading the observer's eyes beyond the leading edge of the deck. The platform supports *four* occasions along it's length: first, as a landing that surmounts the masonry stoop; second, as a fire-place taking advantage of the warmth and conviviality provided by the hearth and chimney; third, as a breezeway between the two interior rooms (to be elaborated on later); and fourth, as a shady place beneath two adjacent pecan trees. The deck connects contradictory realms, stretching between divided ambiguities and opposed tensions. The lack of handrail extends the view from the deck to the land beyond, while the treated wood planks create an edge, distinguishing the elevated platform from the surrounding grass-covered field.

ROOF/WALLS/ROOM

The galvanized steel walls and roof provide the fundamentals of shelter: a vertical barrier to serve as a windbreaker, and a pitched roof to shed rainwater in case of storms. A room is created from combining the elements of wall, roof, and platform. An inside is fashioned in opposition to the expansive world outside. Atkinson's walls invoke the primal expression of enclosure. A single wall is not enough; it takes a minimum of two walls spaced at an interval and parallel to each other to define an interior realm fit for human occupation.

Atkinson creates two chambers set apart but bridged together by the galvanized steel roof. Though clad in the same material and sharing the same tectonic of wood framing, the walls and roof are treated by Atkinson as compositional counterpoints. The pitched roof caps the walls and exposes its rafters. The walls ascend vertical from the platform; while the roof spans horizontal, shadowing the platform, extending lengthwise and paralleling the top bearing plate of the walls.

The two rooms facilitate two occasions in human life: the shared and the private. Each space becomes a sanctuary to the dual aspects of the human spirit — the extrovert (us to others) and the introvert (us to ourselves), the convivial and the sequestered, the grace found in communion (eucharistic) and the self-realization found in private acts (monastic). Furniture and fixtures distinguish the occasions in each room. Repose and privacy are indicated by bed and water closet; whereas domestic communion is indicated by a dining table and the kitchen stove and sink.[12] Both of these rooms are chambers through which we enact our humanity. Each chamber could be guarded by *Penates*, ancient Roman deities that guard the household, specific to the domestic sanctuary.

The landscape is reflected in the building as if it were an emanation from within: the reflection of blue sky in the vertical galvanized steel roof and wall cladding (ascending) — the earthtones of the land in the texture and color of the horizontal deck and platform (reposing).

Wood frame construction requires sensitivity to spacing, interval, and intermediacy. The space *between* studs is the important yet absent aspect of frame construction. Once the frame is clad, is it transforms into a rigid diaphragm, becoming *taut* like a drum or tent. The character of the wall outside is that of durability and resistance — while the character of the interior is one of refinement and delicacy. The walls of Atkinson's Zachary House demonstrate that the world we humans

create for ourselves is in *addition* to the natural world, a completion of the natural world made habitable by us. This human world has a dual purpose: to confront nature outside with an according toughness, and inside with the opposite, to create and environment fitted to human comfort.[13]

The interval of the frame is revealed through translucent corrugated panels which interlock with the corrugations of the exterior galvanized steel walls. These floor-to-ceiling openings filter light from outside and illuminate the inside through a second layer of translucent-white acrylic panels set flush with the gypsum board. Light is transmuted as it passes through the wall. Another set of openings, four in all, demonstrate the complex demands placed on a building's openings. Articulate in their design, Atkinson's openings combine door with window, concealed sliding screens with hinged hurricane shutters. Within a thin frame, these openings accommodate various options that gradually transform from complete enclosure to an unencumbered void.

Intervals within the frame lead to ratios of breadth and height; and through the relation of differing intervals, ratios combine to form proportions. Atkinson reconciles the use of standardized and conventional materials (nominal 2x4's, standard countertops and casework, corrugated panels of galvanized steel and acrylic, sheets of gypsum board, tile, wood flooring, etc.) with a set of transcendent ratios (2/5, 3/5, 4/5 and 1/2, 1/4, 1/8). A flood of proportional relationships found throughout the various rectangles that outline the building intercede symmetrically between the four elements.[14]

The ratios found throughout the four elements of the house constitute a set of proportional relationships that vacillate between breadth, width, and height. While aware of these transcendent ratios, Atkinson attuned the relationship between each element *intuitively* — he made the chimney: not too tall, not too short — he has set the roof pitch: not too steep, not too shallow.[15] Each element is treated respectively and in combination and thereby Atkinson achieves the condition of *right size* and right relational appearance. 'Right size' means the appropriateness well-befitting of things, a composed harmony between elements, or *bienseance*.[16] The retreat that Stephen Atkinson fashions for his client need not be lived in to possess the qualities that make it human: the house acts out its humanity by its very presence — as an indicator of human existence and aspiration within the world.

VOID ROOM/VESTIBULE

Next we encounter a breezeway reminiscent of other dwellings (specifically the Southern dogtrot); a void room that serves both as interval and connector. The void room is open on two opposing ends. From within the space, occupants are offered with a vista, being given a selective picture of the natural world. As we peer through this void room, we encounter the world beyond, not as a person immersed *within* but as a something to be viewed from *without*. The void room, when thought of as a frame, becomes a vestibule through which we can engage the world.

When we follow the grain of the deck boards, the void room becomes an interval between two doors, a hall — an open break between two realms. While a chasm is formed, the deck below our feet becomes a bridge, connecting disparate realms and drawing the two living spaces together. The bridge, in both metaphor and reality, exposes the interdependence of things once considered separate. A door may be open or shut, serving as both conjunction and disjunction between realms; yet a bridge always unites across space and intervenes between things divided.[17] The breezeway manifests the ambiguous aspects of passage and door. Atkinson's enigmatic and poetic breezeway could easily be dedicated to *Janus*, the ancient Italian deity depicted with two faces — one looking forward and the other back; this versatile god presided over doors, passages, entrances, personified all beginnings, and whose namesake we commemorate with the month of January. Janus gives spirit to a significant *nexus* in human experience — where the passage of time conflates with the composition of space.

ATKINSON'S APPROACH: A MATTER OF REDUCTION[18]

The Zachary House is reminiscent of previous dwellings. Many critics consider the building a reinterpretation of typological forms: the dogtrot and shotgun house. To be sure, this is a superficial insight, since the house operates beyond the level of formal association and ends in much deeper levels of human experience. For Stephen Atkinson, personal reminiscence and cultural memory serve as a propelling force that directs us toward the future, and in doing so, carries the past forward.

The method by which Stephen Atkinson makes architecture is not one of abstraction but rather a process of *reduction* — a *distillation* from diffuse sources that must be forced through an architectural act of compression — intuitively reduced and condensed to form an

effusion of essences. Through design, Atkinson takes the abundant complexities of relationships — between land and sky, people and place, life and location, enclosure and expanse, past and future — and draws tight the cord between extremes, pulling them closer, drawing them together into a singular association. And by a secret and reductive design process, simple forms encompass a vastness of spirit.[19]

Stephen Atkinson's work possesses the evocative character of offering the observer with the discomforting sense of something already seen. Through the use of spare and primal elements his work reminds the observer of other buildings, forms, and places; Atkinson's work unpretentiously links the transcendent with the common. The thought persists that Atkinson is in pursuit of that which is timeless in architecture.

The forms employed by Stephen Atkinson are expedients — pondered upon and reduced to a composition of primal elements set in a specific landscape. Undoubtedly beginning and ending with a simple figure, the work of Stephen Atkinson goes through a deliberate distillation of multiple sources from which his architecture might be derived. Atkinson's work in the Zachary House is that of stubborn returns, journeys into memory; an intuitive search to retrieve some elusive condition with which to imbue this particular place.

The configuration of form that comprises the Zachary House gives the observer an immediate sense of *apprehension* due to their *familiarity*. We feel as if Atkinson's forms and spaces are not determined fully but remain consciously unresolved, thereby allowing this architecture to be open to further interpretations never considered by the designer. Were the derivation of his forms refined any further, they might lose their raw power and thereby weaken their ability to latch onto the familiar and the transcendent.

By keeping his architecture simple to point of ambiguity, Atkinson leaves his work open to multiple meaning. This is a specific kind of ambiguity, resulting in the creation of a *poetic construct* which contains an essence greater than its potential interpretations — a persistent formal structure whose meaning, when guessed at, will be less than the overall essence of the architecture.

The elements of the Zachary House (Chimney/Hearth/Stoop, Deck/Platform, Roof/Walls/Room, Void Room/Vestibule) have their own analogical structure that individually call forth multiple sources; yet, through the composition of these already potent forms in an overall organizing structure, their individual meanings go through a radical shift, evoking a newly defined whole which is greater than the contribution of each particular element. By combining elements which independently withstand multiple meaning into a potent formal composition, Atkinson suffuses his architecture with broader meaning. As Aldo Rossi aptly suggests, ''The emergence of relations among things, more than the things themselves, always give rise to new meanings.''[20] Thus, the juxtaposition of elements which are independently laden with meaning allows for internal reference between the elements — the establishment of a conversation between elements that purports an even deeper and unruly essence.

Atkinson's work is not mimetic in a direct sense, but rather is a distillation from original sources both real and imagined. Atkinson creates an architectural composition of primal elements that contain within themselves the memory of other structures. The disturbing, archetypal quality of Atkinson's work is caused by the lack of clarity as to where his analogical sources begin or end. Atkinson's architecture generates its identity through the dual conditions of presence and memory. The overall significance of the Zachary House draws from the personal memories of the observer in reference to a greater *cultural memory* — the ultimate source from which Atkinson draws his images.

CONCLUSION: A PLACE BETWEEN LAND AND SKY

We humans create a world for ourselves by transforming nature; our way is to humanize the world's phenomena. In antipathy to the natural world, we humans extract a place for ourselves. Our minds are attuned to distinction, the perception of aesthetic opposites. Intuition tells us that dichotomous phenomenon give *order* to the world, twinned phenomena of light and dark, day and night, high and low — continuums range from wide to narrow, tall to long, inside to outside, open to closed.

Through architecture, humanity creates places of harmony between these opposites; buildings are attuned to human life and aspiration. Atkinson uses architecture to invoke a *microcosm*, and thereby establishes a humane place within that larger cosmos; his building, as a means of expression, places that greater cosmos in concinnity with our lives.[21]

What makes a building both timeless and local? The search for the answer to this conundrum seems implicit to the work of Stephen Atkinson. To reveal the *timeless* in the *local* is a rare gift for an architect to bring forth.

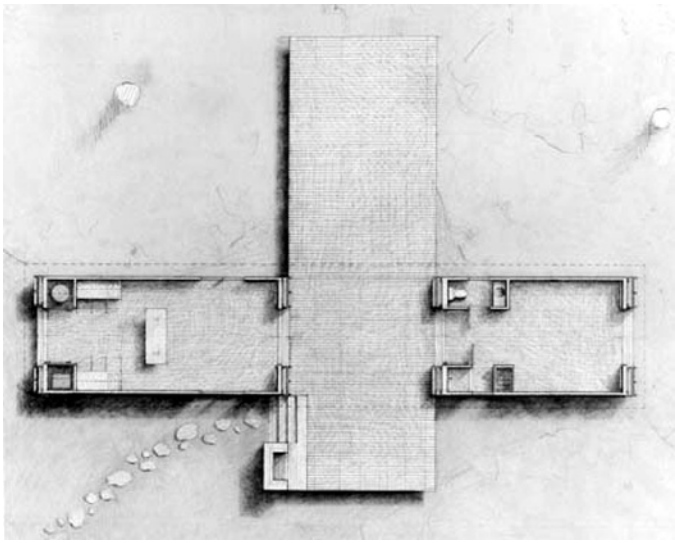
Yet somehow architecture and rural buildings are at odds; architecture is the result of deliberate, sophisticated, and elliptical method of inquiry; but the rural building is triggered into being by the builder's instincts. Atkinson's Zachary House either reconciles the inherent differences between architecture and rural building or clarifies their basic conflict. Certainly with architecture, the urge to represent prior to building reflects a desire to visualize some intention by first *picturing the possible* — literally to *see* something not yet made. The farmer builds *without representation* (or from very little); decisions are deliberate but not deliberated. But the architect proposes to build *only through representation* and the appraisal of representation; it is the iterative process of deliberating buildings in drawing first, prior to their making that leads to the kind of idealization we associate with architecture.

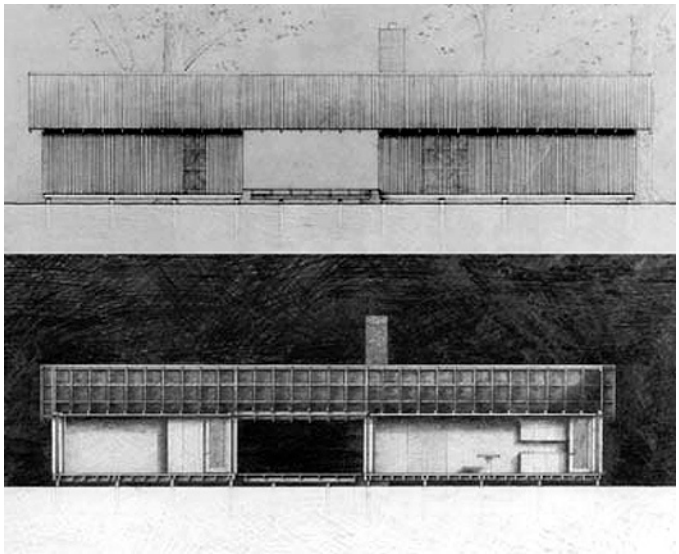
Each element of the Zachary House is a *monad* — a unique essence centered in a human-inspired cooperation of atoms that share a hidden principle. These monadic elements cooperate to form the house, which in turn cooperates with its land [a *monad* itself, composed of distinct monads (land and sky)], and finally we include the motivator of this whole *microcosm*, the human occupant to land and house, monads in triple conjunction (house/land/person — body/world/spirit?), each alternately circling between and within the orbit of the other. Each monad individually and conjunctively inspires the thoughts of the occupant; thoughts at once concrete and incomplete, never exhausted.[22]

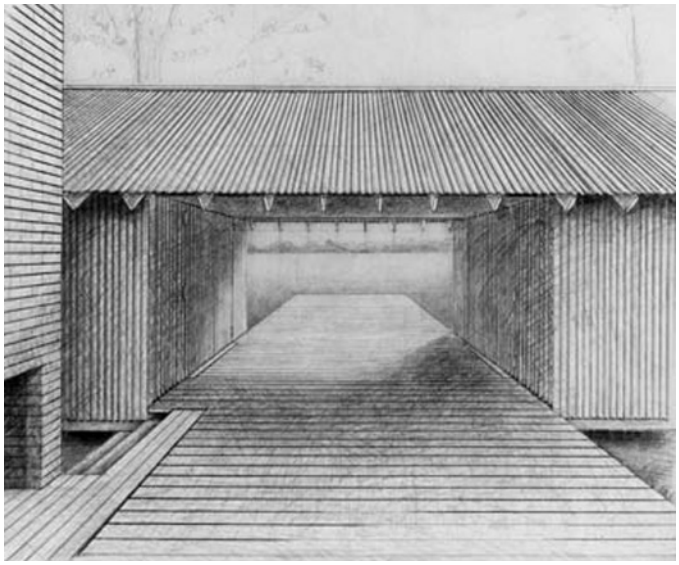
With Atkinson's work, we discover the task of architecture reduced: as a purveyor of cultural meaning and cultural memory, as an insightful observer of human life *upon the land* and *over time* the architect must endeavor to *perceive* and then *express* the transcendent and immutable marks of human presence. As always, the architect's task is to house our humanity in new works. We live between the walls, under the roof, and above the ground. Immeasurable nature made domestic, *architecture* constitutes a mediated, human place between the terrene and celestial.

(I have written before on the subject of Steven Atkinson and his Zachary House. Another essay, different in content, is scheduled for publication later this year in Volume 25 of *Oz Journal*, published by the College of Architecture, Planning, and Design at Kansas State University. Also, for more on the Zachary House or Stephen Atkinson and his work, please visit his website: www.studioatkinson.com)

PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES OF THE ZACHARY HOUSE AND DRAWINGS BY STEVEN ATKINSON







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NOTES

[1] Heraclitus, *Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus*, translated by Brooks Haxton (New York: Viking Penguin, 2001) passim. The inseparability of paradox, flux as represented by *fire*, and the irreproducibility of all motion are an essential ideas in the remaining pieces of Heraclitus' thought — take for example, these four fragments ''The sun is new again, all day./ By cosmic rule, as day yields night, so winter summer, war peace, plenty famine. All things change. Fire penetrates the lump of myrrh, until the joining bodies die and rise again in smoke called incense./ What was scattered gathers. What was gathered blows apart.'' And the most famous of Heraclitus' fragments ''The river where you set your foot just now is gone — those waters giving way to this, now this.'' In addition, I recommend Guy Davenport's story, *Herakleitos* from *Tatlin! Six Stories* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974) 104-119.

[2] I must suggest comparison to the musings of Juhani Pallasmaa as he concerns himself with *simplicity*: ''The richness of a work of art lies in the vitality of the images it arouses, and — paradoxically — the images open to most interpretations are aroused by the simplest, most archetypal forms.'' Though not consciously considered, the content of this essay parallels many of the ideas conjured by Pallasmaa in his essay, ''The Geometry of Feeling: A Look at the Phenomenology of Architecture'' republished in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*; Kate Nesbitt, editor (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 448-453.

[3] This is a polite point of disagreement with what is actually an interesting issue of *Architecture Magazine* (January, 2000). Laugier's Primitive Hut was an imagined primal source for classical architecture. Laugier states, ''The little hut I have just described is the type on which all the magnificences of architecture are elaborated . . . The upright wood pieces suggest the idea of columns, the horizontal pieces resting on them entablatures. Finally, the inclined members which constitute the roof provide the idea of pediment.'' For Laugier, classical architecture becomes allegorical myth, a representational ''retelling'' of archaic practices in permanent form; a monument to an ideal past. Atkinson's Zachary house is not mimetic

of an ideal (though it may make manifest *archetypes*, resonating deep in our psyche). As I argue in this essay, his strategy is one of *reduction* — a distillation from many actual sources from the history of architecture into a rarified form that upon completion, opens up to multivalent meaning. With all this said, Ned Cramer wrote a delightful debut article on Stephen Atkinson's work in the above mentioned issue of *Architecture Magazine*. Cramer carves out of Laugier's *Essay on Architecture* only what is specific and appropriate to the Zachary House.

[4] Zachary, Louisiana is north of Baton Rouge; a landscape crossed by a strata that geologists classify as *prairie*; a typically grassy region known for meandering streams and floodplains terraced slightly higher in elevation than the river's delta region; it is noticeably different than lowland swamps; the terrain is flat but mildly undulating and populated by pines and deciduous trees that prefer a sandier soil.

[5] This notion stems from the similarity in relation between the harmony of musical instruments and harmony of architectural elements. Although a rather common notion, it was succinctly defined by Sir Henry Wotton in his *The Elements of Architecture*. In the section ''Of Doores and Windowes'' he states, ''These *In-lets* of *Men* and of *Light*, I couple together, because I find their due Dimensions, brought under one rule, by *Leone Alberti* (a learned Searcher) who from the Schoole of *Pythagoras* (where it was a fundamental *Maxime*, that the *Images* of all things are latent in *Numbers*) doth determine the comeliest Proportion, between breadths and heights; Reducing *Symmetrie* to *Symphonie*, and the *harmonie* of *Sounde*, to a kinde of *harmonie* in *Sight*, after this manner: the two principall *Consanances* . . .'' Sir Henry Wotton, *The Elements of Architecture*, [facsimile reprint of the first edition (London, 1624)] (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968) 53-54.

[6] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Volume Two* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939) 89-90.

[7] Atkinson's elements serve as simple signals, understandable in reference to Charles Sanders Peirce's division of signs, specifically his classification of the *index*. Atkinson's building elements serve as *indicators* just as farm buildings are an indication of their purpose (the barn, the grain silo, the crib). Peirce's term 'index' derives from the conventional use of the term 'indicate.' This division has great implications to architecture as a form of expression. Peirce defines 'index' as a thing that focuses attention. For instance: a doorway indicates physical passage, a canopy may indicate shade, a street may indicate direction. Geoffrey Broadbent's essay ''Architects and Their Symbols'' relies on Peirce's contribution to the study of signs. Broadbent suggests that certain symbols in architecture may be unreliable and that a more fundamental and reliable form of architectural expression is the index, which does not require indoctrination into culturally specific forms of expression. For more on this, please see Charles Sanders Peirce, ''Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs,'' from *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, edited by Justin Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 1955) 98-119. Also, please consult Geoffrey Broadbent's ''Architects and Their Symbols,'' most recently to be found in *Classic Readings in Architecture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1999) 96-120.

[8] Each of these ''four elements'' can be broken down into a set of *extended elements*. Here is a list of eleven extended elements, comprising another level of classification: Stoop/masonry steps, Hearth/chimney, Corrugated metal roof, Wood frame walls, Void room/vestibule, Expository room (active/extroverted half), Preparatory room (passive/introverted half), Doors/screens/shutters, Thresholds/openings/frames, Utilities and fixtures, and the Immediate landscape and shade trees. My limiting the composition of the Zachary house to ''four elements'' may suggest some relation to Gottfried Semper's four elements of convivial *hearth*, raised *floor*, woven *walls*, and *roof* framing. See Henry Francis Mallgrave, ''Gottfried Semper: Architecture and the Primitive Hut'' *Reflections 3, Vol.3, No.1, Fall 1985* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 1985) 60-71. Nonetheless, my sense leads me to believe, at this time, that only *incidental* allusions exist between Semper's anthropological musing over the Caribbean hut from the Great Exhibition of 1851and my hypothetical division of Stephen Atkinson's Zachary House.

[9] Vitruvius, perhaps echoed by Semper, describes fire as an acculturating and civilizing agent entitled to occupy the spiritual center of a dwelling. It is perhaps archetypal for fire to the considered convivial: offering light to assuage night's darkness, its hypnotic variability to inspire the imagination, its required tending to and constant feeding of, its heat gives warm against the cold, it usefulness in turning raw food into human cuisine, and gathering around the fire is always the place for storytelling and religious ceremony — all of these uses of fire reinforce it as a social centerpiece to human life, with water being its only primordial counterpart [as I recall here Sverre Fehn's poetic description of fire and water in ''The Unit'' from *The Thought of Construction* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1983)49-52]. See Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, translated by Morris Morgan (New York: Dover Publications, 1960) 38; Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972) passim; and Henry Francis Mallgrave, ''Gottfried Semper: Architecture and the Primitive Hut'' *Reflections 3, Vol.3, No.1, Fall 1985* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois, 1985) 66.

[10] This is strikingly similar to the enormous hearth in Erik Gunnar Asplund's summer cottage Stennäs, Lisön, Sorunda (1937) . . . not in *form* but in the very imaginative *idea* of combining steps with hearth. See Stuart Wrede, *The Architecture of Erik Gunnar Asplund* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980) 188.

[11] The phrases *clearing*, *place of action*, and *taking place* are found in the writings of David Michael Levin and Christian Norberg-Schulz. Though not expressly stated, David Michael Levin points out that the *dance-circle*, is a gathering of action and place since literally, the name suggests a dance *taking place* there. See Chapter 7, Part I, ''A Place of Clearing,'' from David Michael Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) 322-338. Christian Norberg-Schulz, with regard to Otto Friedrich Bollnow states that, ''Thus the German word *Raum* (space) meant the action of freeing a place for settlement (*einraumen*), before it came to denote the place as such. This state of affairs is well expressed by the term ''take place.'' This concept of place has two meanings: *place of action* and *point of departure*.'' From Christian Norberg-Schulz, ''The Concept of Place,'' Architecture: Meaning and Place (New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1988) 29-30. Also to understand the source of Norberg-Schulz's comment, one must see the German edition of O. F. Bollnow, *Mensh und Raum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000) — sadly, this book has been in print since 1963 and has never been translated into an English edition.

[12] Thoreau understood how furniture was an index of occasion. Here is his oft cited quote, ''I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society.'' Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* in *Walden and Other Writings* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982) 208.

[13] For more on this, please see my essay, ''Where Sky Rubs Against Soil: The Metaphorical Horizon in Dom. Hans van der Laan's Architecture'' published in the proceedings of the *2001 ACSA West Central Regional Conference* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas School of Architecture, 2001) 357-370. My conversations with Stephen Atkinson have revealed both his awareness of and affection for the work of Hans van der Laan.

[14] This insight points me to Alberti and his definition of *lineaments*. He states, ''Let us therefore begin thus: the Whole matter of building is composed of lineaments and structure. All the intent and purpose of lineaments lies in finding the correct, infallible way of joining and fitting together those lines and angles which define and enclose the surfaces of a building. It is the function and duty of lineaments, then, to prescribe an appropriate place, exact numbers, a proper scale, and a graceful order for whole buildings and for each of their constituent parts, so that the whole form and appearance of a building may depend on the lineaments alone. . .'' Leon Battista

Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books* trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, Robert Tavernor (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988) 7.

[15] With regards to transcendent ratios and the proportional relations, I am compelled to add a brief note concerning *concinnity*. I would like to indicate that use of lineaments has much to do with the pursuit of *concinnity* in both natural and artistic orders. Both Leon Battista Alberti and Laugier suggest that order and harmony in architecture is but one means of expressing the fundamental order that lies within the diversity of things; and the discoverable relationships between them occur when the consonances fit together in mysterious harmony and perfect rapturous relation between God, divine number, proportion, and observation of patterns within the visible universe. For more on *concinnity*, please see Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988) 303; also consult this text's very helpful glossary, where *concinnitas* is described.

[16] I make dual references here: first, to Aldo van Eyck's idea of 'right size;' and second, to Ned Cramer's insight (his article was mentioned earlier) in applying Laugier's use of *bienseance* to Atkinson's work. Bienseance means literally ''well-befitting;'' an instance of proper decorum; this includes appropriate manners, dress, and décor for an occasion. Thus, bienseance points to the rules of decorum that govern action within a place, being an intermingling of place and occasion — the imposition of one upon the other to forge an orderliness and harmony.

[17] For further inquiry into these ideas, see Georg Simmel's republished essay ''Bridge and Door,'' translated in *Lotus International*, Vol. 47 (Milan: Electa Spa, 1985) 52-56.

[18] It is important that I address the various uses of the term ''reduction'' so as to better clarify (or perhaps obscure?) *my* use. I use the term not necessarily as used by phenomenologists — as a term that points to a method for exposing the intentionality hidden within phenomenon. This is the employment of reduction on the *receiving* or *appreciating* end of things in consciousness. I suggest reduction on the *making* end of things, as a component of design method.

Certainly, both the phenomenological use of reduction and the way in which I use the term requires the employment of intuition — an active form of knowing — the primordial and immediate affectation/response to the world, an unanalyzable combination of thought and feeling [''Intuition is your most exacting sense. . . your greatest gift.'' — to cite Louis I. Kahn, ''Brooklyn, NY'' *Perspecta 19* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982) 91.]. For the phenomenologist (who is interested in a pure and essential description of lived-experience), ''reduction'' establishes a parenthetical (bracketed) limit to sensory experience, directing us away from the sensory experience of things as they exist outside the mind and to insight into the workings of consciousness itself (this being the first level of phenomenological reduction). It is perhaps as the second level of phenomenological reduction — eidetic reduction — that we encounter some potential similarities between phenomenological reduction and reduction as a design method. For at this level of reduction, the phenomenologist grasps at essences — *Wesensschau* (showing of essence) — the intuition of essences leading to an intuitive comparison between multiple and kaleidoscopic variations within experience so as to meditate on what remains unchanged (invariant) in the eidetic. To the phenomenologist, this constitutes a focused meditation on the essential structure of phenomena — what remains from the employment of this method is the transcendent essence ''consistently observed on all occasions'' (*Ideas*, 164). Finally, a third transcendental reduction seeks to discern the *meaning* of discovered essence — the intentionality within lived-experience.

Thus the use of the term ''reduction'' in phenomenology follows from a grasping of the world in consciousness and reducing it from *empirical facts* to *phenomena* to *essence* and thereby revealing the true countenance of things. How does this differ from my use of the term *reduction* in Atkinson's design activity?

Certainly, firstly, reduction as a means of access into the intentionality of experience, loosely conceived as akin to phenomenological method, can be used to uncover essences as a component of any creative act; isolating the essence of the thing one wishes to express from a myriad of possibilities. Second, reduction, by definition, is a form of elimination of that which is accidental so as to achieve only the essential — an attitude implicit to all stone carvers: to remove so as to reveal. Reduction is consonant with the impulse to express something *more* while reducing the form to something less; not by abstraction or any rational process that overlays an a priori system from which a false formal simplicity can be assembled. Reduction arises from a process whereby forms are reduced from the fullness of a myriad of antecedents, crossed-referenced so as to discern their shared essence or intentional structure; artists reductively exploit this in their work. By reduction, a form is honed, winnowed, subtracted by the architect's intuitive skills so as to attempt to grasp the essential monad of the desired expression.

At the other end of this process, the receiving end — the observer intimates the reduction of essentials from various antecedents. If the architect has reduced their work to an essence, then other associations — many of which the architect may have been oblivious to — abound. Nonetheless, there is a certain kinship between the reduction of which I write and the reduction as presented by phenomenologists — if in fact, the only relationship may be a particular truth in its use by dictionary definition. At this time I am not inclined to say, except both forms of ''reduction'' reside, act, and transpire in the engaged mind; in a shifting consciousness — between the makeup of the self and the structure of the world.

Sources for this endnote: ''Phenomenology'' from *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1995); ''Phenomenology'' by Edmund Husserl, in the 14th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1929); Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Phenomenology* (New York: Collier Books, 1962) Chapter 6; and Pierre Thevenaz, ''What is Phenomenology?'' essay from, *What is Phenomenology?* edited by James M. Edie (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1962) 37-92.

[19] Atkinson's method operates along lines similar to the actual process of distillation. Writer John Berger describes the distillation of *gnôle*, a cider-alcohol distilled from apples and wood smoked sausages. Berger here describes the bull-like appearance of the distillery while simultaneously remarking on the process, ''That the produce of this giant, shaking, copper-horned bull should come, drop by drop, out of a duct no larger than the open beak of a small bird, is a sign of it's secret. Its secret is to transform work [of growing, harvesting, and mashing apples by hand] into spirit. What is emptied into the vases is work; what comes out of the beak is imagination.'' Excerpted from John Berger's short story ''The Value of Money', found in his collection entitled *Pig Earth* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979) 88.

[20] Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984) 19.

[21] A marginal note concerning architecture and the invocation of a microcosm: Pallasmaa, in his essay ''The Geometry of Feeling'' describes architecture (via the house) as a ''mythic tool with which we try to introduce a reflection of eternity into our momentary existence . . . The quality of architecture. . . [resides] in its capacity for awakening our imagination.'' All in all, architecture (through the very means by which it houses us within this world) points to the transcendent within our mortal lives. Louis I. Kahn, on many occasions, speaks of fairy tales. Once he mused of changing his profession: ''to write the new fairy tales.'' (from the *1972 John William Lawrence Memorial Lecture at Tulane University*; published by the Tulane University School of Architecture and republished by other sources). Later, Kahn extends his thoughts on fairy tales: ''The fairy tale is that which lies in the desire *to be to express*.'' (from Richard S. Wurman's *What Will Be Has Always Been: The Words of Louis I. Kahn* (New York: Access & Rizzoli, 1986) 220. He continues by describing the fairy tale as the tale of the artist — the desire to transcend nature, the joy in the making of something that has never been. For Kahn, the fairy tale seems to exist somehow between the world of material and human desire — *expression* has the capacity

to reveal what might have been and what could still be — the human capacity as myth maker.

J.R.R. Tolkien, in his essay ''On Fairy-stories,'' describes the necessary conditions for the creation of a ''Secondary World,'' a fictional fantasy world that is at once strange and familiar. This artifice of a Secondary World must somehow be endowed with the ''inner consistency of reality'' while yet requiring the employment of our *imagination* to fill its essential ''unreality'' with the potency of the fantastic. Whereas the miracle of primary reality is the product of a true Creator, Tolkein describes fantasy or archetypal myth as a means by which mortal humans make pure Art — the act of refashioning God's Creation into a secondary or ''Sub-creation'' that is an intermingling of our humanity with the reality from which it was made — a true microcosm — betwixt the familiar and the fantastic. With architecture considered as such, we combine, or rather *recombine*, aspects of the primary world in which we live (time, space, matter, gravity, and light) and fashion a secondary world imbued with human imagination and aspiration — the making of a *microcosm* — a Sub-creation that combines our human inspiration with Creation — a pocket of humanity within the folds of an infinite reality — us within the world (a little world for humanity made from the substance of a greater world). For more on ''Sub-creation,'' see J.R.R. Tolkien's essay ''On Fairy-stories,'' most recently found in *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1966) 33-99; passim.

[22] See Leibniz, ''Monadology'' from *Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965) 148-163. Also, for what inspired my paltry paragraph above, see Guy Davenport, ''The Dawn in Erewhon'' from *Tatlin!* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974) 249-250. The particular section begins with ''The monad has no parts and is itself part of nothing. . .'' and ends with allusions to Wittgenstein, ''The real world is what is left unsaid when we have said everything. What we have said is language and the world is not language. A rock is not a word.''