A Sensorial Reading of the Street

by

Tan Sue-Lyn, Cheryl
HT004053L

Submitted to the Department of Architecture
on 14 December 2001 in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Architecture

Abstract

While the conventional kit of design tools is well-adapted for the description of static objects from static viewpoints, it seems inadequate for representing the sensorial quality of the street as one moves through it. Since Gordon Cullen's contribution of the technique of serial vision, little attempt has been made to reclaim representations of perceptual qualities of urban spaces with time. Donald Appleyard notes the necessity, in the case of the "city designer", for "a language using experiential symbols." It must be a language easily learned, and therefore as close in form as possible to the original environment. Hence, the first objective of this dissertation is to derive a notation which records the sequential moment-by-moment sensorial stimuli encountered on the street as the user walks through it. This notation would be analogous to a musical score for an orchestra that will allow one to "read experience". It will reflect sensory information along a shopping street, as it becomes available to a pedestrian over time.

The sensorial stimuli along Orchard Road will then be mapped out according to this derived mode of representation. Corresponding reception of the various segments by the users (or pedestrians) will be indicated alongside. Thus, the second intent - to find the correlation between environmental stimuli and users' response to this experiential data. The assumption here is that although other factors e.g. culture, economics, etc, will no doubt affect users' response, the experiential quality of the environment will still strongly determine the desire to be on a particular segment of the street.

Dissertation Supervisor: Low Boon Liang
Title: Fellow