6 Common Sense Design

Let me conclude with a few comments on common sense design. My appeal to "fit", and "harmony" has as much to do with creating a space in which to live and work as they do with history. And harmony seems to require even more. Having a sense of the historicity of the space is part of what is needed to live in harmony in it. On the surface it makes no sense to put a modern 60 story glass and steel skyscraper in the middle of an ancient village of 200 people. That does not require a fully developed aesthetics, just, it might seem, common sense. It would be an insult to the generations of inhabitants of the village and the values and way of life they have contributed to the culture. Yet our Jamesean sense of common sense brings with it this very sense of historicity, in that there is a definite case of cognitive dissonance that emerges when we try to project the image of a 60 story glass and steel skyscraper into Delft's town hall plaza. But why should this be so? It is, I submit because given our past experiences of cities like Delft, we do not expect to see such a space in that space. Goodman, in speaking of Hume's account of induction puts it this way.

> Regularities in experience, according to [Hume], give rise to habits of expectation; thus it is predictions conforming to past regularities that are normal or valid. But Hume overlooks the fact that some regularities do and some do not establish such habits… (Goodman, 1955, 81)

Goodman's solution is his theory of projection. My solution is to say that certain expectations, in the form of standardly used but thoroughly unexamined inferences bring with them the history of those expectations. And they do so by way of there having been developed over time acceptable inferences which we are taught to make because they have been successful in guiding action.

Yet, when we invoke the power of history we must be careful. History is a complicated mistress. While she grounds us in the past, we must not, at the same time, consider the past as something concrete. In short, to be grounded is not to be stuck. I am not denying that there were events that transpired over time in a certain order, etc. Let's call that "what actually happened" or History 1. Nor am I talking about history as *the narrative* we construct about what happened: History 2. Furthermore, in constructing such a narrative we need to be alert to the *historiography* we employ, History 3. Thus we might employ certain terms in a manner that suggests they are constants. An example could possibly be my use of the term "Dutch" in describing the Graves complex. On the other hand, if I am true to my earlier comments, terms like "Dutch" ought to change over time due to a variety of historical contingencies. Thus it would be inappropriate to refer the people living in the area around the Netherlands as Dutch in 1250 BCE since, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term was first used in the 9th Century BCE to refer to Germans (hence, Deutschland) and only gradually restricted to what we now know as the Netherlands, beginning in the 16th century. So, in a sense we can say that history changes, that is, History 2 changes. The narrative changes as we learn more

about the past and as we change our criteria for how to construct an adequate narrative (History 3). Keeping that thought in mind, we can offer a different, and even a positive assessment of the Graves complex in The Hague.

7 Conclusion – Graves Reconsidered and the Mystery of the Guggenheim Finally Solved

In their attempt to hold back the sea and increase its usable land mass, the Dutch have become increasingly concerned and identified with the technology of dikes and pumps, and with their constant battle with nature to secure their limited space. The meaning of being Dutch has changed from being identified with a sea faring colonial empire to that associated with a highly technologically sophisticated culture directly confronting nature. In the light of that evolving history, Graves, in his The Hague complex, instead of what I had suggested above, could be seen as looking to the future of the Netherlands, with its increasing dependency on massive and sophisticated technologies and how it might solve past problems in a technologically futuristic fashion. A closer look at the The Hague complex reveals a complicated set of interconnected buildings and elevators that might be construed as a futuristic dam, pointing the way to the next stage in the evolution of Dutch culture. Hence its massive and forbidding base can now still be seen as massive, but because that kind of a dam needs that kind of base. Further, what on our initial interpretation we saw as threatening the park on one side of it, can now be seen as defending it from the intruding ocean. Likewise, constructing a 60 story skyscraper in the middle of Delft's central square might also suggest the future by way of providing a means for providing living space in the face of decreasing opportunities for land expansion and the need for alternatives to the traditional Dutch way of living in single family houses. In so doing, what, on one view, could be seen as an affront to Dutch cultural sensibilities, might, on this one, be a means for suggesting solutions for historical problems.

One final example: the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. To put it mildly, when first unveiled it raised a significant fuss. In a line with traditional town houses facing Central park, it presents not a traditional flat face but a curved space clearly descending in a spiral from top to bottom. In one sense it can be seen as totally out of place in that environment. It breaks the line one's eye follows as you look up the avenue. It sticks out and disturbs its surroundings. What was Frank Lloyd Wright thinking?

Let me suggest that he was thinking about the history of art and demanding that we reconsider how we think about it as well. Traditional art museums present their displays in disjointed rooms. In this way we can look at 17th Century Dutch painting in one room, and 19th Century American Romanticism in another, thereby allowing us to capture a snap shot of art history. But what if that is the wrong way to view the history of art? Is it really the case that we can draw clear boundaries between the 16th and 17th centuries, or between American and Dutch art? What Wright said