

INTRODUCTION

Life is an affair of people not places,
but for me life is an affair of places
and that is the problem.

Wallace Stevens

This issue is comprised of a series of essays, written and drawn, upon the theme of the place. This is a predominant theme in the work of our School, but there is by no means a consensus among the authors as to its relevance within a larger architectural discourse. It is precisely this divergence of opinion that has led to the selection of place as a theme for the issue; one which should work against the notion that studying place has something to do with a naive regionalism best confined to the study of fishing sheds in the Maritime landscape.

In a school of architecture the specifics of a given problem are first suspended or left open to question in order to explore the essence of what lies beyond any one of them. Place is one such issue and in fact for many years the very first problem posed of architecture students at this university was one for which there was no site, one in which the rudiments of design were explored through the design of a placeless dwelling for one person: a hut.

For some this suspension of a physical context was a liberating experience. For others this first exercise marked a startling confrontation with themselves. However, both strategies share the common problem of confronting oneself in the world and the difficult first lessons of mark making. For some these first marks must be made into the earth. For others into the realm of the imagined place. In the past year, this has changed and the first year's studio began to turn toward measured reading of places alongside the design of a dwelling.

The East-Of issue is not intended to be read as a prospectus of work undertaken at the school. In some instances, this book does contain the traces of school projects and some attempts at searching beyond the specifics of a project. This book represents the steps of individuals attempting to act with a sense of will, of volition within the medium of design. As many of them would attest, this is a problem not easily translated to the medium of print. But the compilation of this collection of work suggests that a book does itself become a place, a figure and ground in which marks are made.

Just as a child will not learn to read until it has first developed an image of itself in the world, learning to read is central to one's notion of place: of location, time and culture. Attempting to remember the how of or the way one learned to read is a difficult if not impossible thing to do. What is far more essential is the knowing what to do with this gift..., of where one might go, of what one might be. Of what lies next. East of where....?

