

Karl Linn in Conversation with Louis Kahn—May 14, 1965



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Introduction by Karl Linn

I met Louis Kahn when we were both teaching at the University of Pennsylvania. My understanding of environmental design was profoundly deepened by my communications with him. During our conversations I had glimmers of understanding that acts of environmental planning, architecture, and landscape architecture—designing open spaces and spaces in and around buildings—are acts of parenting. Parents have a deep, intuitive perception of the uniqueness of each of their offspring and strive to provide opportunities for that child to unfold.

I also began to understand our work as acts of gardening. Gardeners are aware of the innate potential of each plant for which they try to create an ecological niche, an environment that will ensure its optimal growth and unfolding. I came to believe that the aspiration of architects and landscape architects should be to create spaces that help those who will inhabit them to unfold and manifest their full potential. Too many of our physical environments accommodate only quantitative growth—more people and more cars—rather than encouraging organic growth and maturation.

Kahn's great contribution was that he could articulate these ideas poetically and incorporate them in the design of his buildings. He always talked about having a sense of becoming. He would ponder what something wants to be and to become. We humans spend our lifetimes in search of what we sense we can be, in search of conditions that

allow us to grow into what we have a sense of wanting to be.

Kahn really came into his own after he turned sixty. He worked all over the world. Being so spiritually attuned he struck a resonance in Asia, designing and building significant buildings in India and Bangladesh. He told me that he designed one large governmental building in such a way that the officials of different levels of authority would inevitably cross paths. It was a subtle effort on his part to democratize the society.

I met with Kahn at least once a year for a whole day of conversation. We had a very unique friendship. Once in 1960 he arrived at midnight to address the National Council of Instructors of Landscape Architecture (NCILA) conference that I had staged, coming straight from the airport after a long flight. He also met with young people upon my recommendation. I felt that youth were perfect clients for him since they are in the stage of unfolding and becoming. Working within traditional institutions, the sense of becoming can be quite limited.

In his interactions Kahn would clarify his thoughts by expressing them and use the other person as a sounding board. At the same time he had a deep sense of the other person's becoming and asked questions that forced others to reach more deeply into themselves. The broadest range of people assembled at his memorial and spoke of how deeply they felt understood by him—not only academics and professional colleagues and clients but also taxi drivers and elevator operators with whom he must have engaged in conversation.

Kahn inspired me in many ways. Sensing that people have a deep-seated desire for community, I developed participatory processes that motivated people to come together to envision, design, and build commons where people can easily meet. I gave my students an exercise that I called "My Secret Garden" asking them to design their dream house and dream landscape. That inspired them to embark on a process of connecting with what they wanted to become and what kind of space would accommodate that growth.

Sometimes I called the exercise "Space Womb." In a sense, designed spaces function like wombs, nurturing spaces in which the individual grows and develops. Some of the graduate students who had already been designing buildings or landscapes for clients realized that they had been responding primarily to clients' needs for conspicuous consumption. The clients wanted to have the latest fashion in housing, like what is portrayed in magazines. The students realized they should engage in much deeper dialogue with clients to enable them to connect with their deeper and more meaningful needs. A clear sign that you have really connected with the client's sense of becoming is when they ask "How did you know? I never told you what I was yearning for. I can really be myself in this space you created."

Kahn was very supportive of Melon Commons, our pilot neighborhood commons project. He also encouraged our efforts to create construction workshops that would give year-round continuity to the work, even during inclement weather. Such centers provide a safe place for creative energy and the nurturing of community among participants. Sometimes I recommend that communities start with a center instead of a commons because a center can generate many commons. After I told Kahn about these centers, he would refer to them as sanctuaries for experimentation and exclaim how important they were.

Kahn came to Long Island University when I asked him to help me develop the Environmental Arts Program there. He appreciated my emphasis on craftsmanship—that I was trying to re-engage human hands in acts of refining the environment. He was convinced that students should be involved in construction, as well as in design. He felt we were reviving the relationship of master and apprentice, which was missing in most schools of environmental design.

We taped this one of our day-long conversations, and I had it transcribed and edited. The following is highlights from our exchange.

Editor's note: For more background on Karl's work, see his book *Building Commons and Community*, <http://www.newvillagepress.net/book/?GCOI=97660100763100&>, The are more details in Karl's Oral History, <http://www.karllinn.org/OHP.pdf>. In the Digital Media Biography, there is an overview of the work http://www.karllinn.org/media_html/CommunityDesignCenters.html] and a four-minute video of Karl talking about how Louis Kahn inspired him, http://www.karllinn.org/media_html/HowKahnInspiredMe.html

Linn: First, I want to tell you how much I appreciate your seeing me just before your departure. Do you remember, quite a few years ago, I related to you my hopes that you would find your way to Russia and to China? I felt that you could somehow break through and touch people deeply, inspiring them to reach out to one another and find each other in a new reality. People and nations find it so difficult to communicate, but your empa the past five or six years, at milestones of work and growth, with years in between before we met extensively again. Each time you helped me to crystallize my thoughts and bring them into focus. Recently, after two years on the firing line in Washington, D.C., I spent some time in my small cottage in the forest to think through my experiences and make some sense of them. I had kept my nose close to the grindstone involved in action programs for years. Much of this work was high risk and experimental. I didn't choose to play it safe

because I wanted to experience first hand the social complexities that otherwise never reveal themselves.

Kahn: Well, Karl, it seems that your path has run parallel to mine. Now you've got to tell me more about the work in Brooklyn.

Environmental Arts Program at Long Island University

Linn: As a professor of Environmental Arts at Long Island University in Brooklyn, in charge of community outreach, I am putting together a program that I want to present to you for review and counsel. So far, we have assembled a Sketchbook of Ideas and prepared a traveling exhibit that has been shown at the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects in New York City.

Kahn: What are some of the ideas in the Sketchbook?

Linn: One of our suggestions was to transform the Myrtle Avenue train structure into a high-walk structure. The City was about to tear the structure down because the train has become underused. We presented renderings showing how the intricate metal structure of the subway could be used to display advertisements for the storefronts scattered along it. The high-walk system would also feature sitting areas and play areas. We even thought of using the old tracks for cart racing. The elevated position would give visitors a nice view.

Since Long Island University is not well-endowed like Ivy League universities that possess retreat centers in the countryside, we thought the university could



acquire a boat to use for retreats.

To animate the adjacent Fort Green Park, we showed how the steep steps could become an amphitheater with performances taking place on ground level.

Another idea is for the university to convert a street that stretches from the campus to the park into an outdoor corridor of learning with ongoing displays of vital information. This would be

very effective for community outreach.

We are also eager to transform a small building adjacent to the university into an environmental design and craft workshop where neighbors can gather to work on the improvement of their environments – npth personal and communal.

I call our program “Environmental Arts,” since the term “Environmental Design” sounds too commercial. The fine arts are supposed to probe much more deeply into the universal needs of people. I thought that the School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania, where both of us were teaching, had taken on such a challenge. Unfortunately, many people tell me that Environmental Arts connotes to them “decorations” such as murals or banners.

Kahn: I'm not listening so closely to what you say about *the way* you're doing things, as I am thinking about the importance of it being done. This to me is the most important point in what you've said. Unless we can allow these ideas to come out almost spontaneously, what you create is only a semblance of an institution of man. The secret is in *what* to do, not in *how* to do it. And the *what to do* is there in the evidence you've gathered, Karl.

Even the solving of physical problems is incomplete unless we take into account the nature of the problems. New words must be found too. Man doesn't have the right word before the new institution has been made. Of course, you have to have the name to raise funds.. But an imperfect, temporary word can serve the doing, and then a new, more appropriate word can be found.

Environmental Craft Technology

Linn: You probably recall, when my students and I developed Melon Commons [the pilot neighborhood commons project] that I imagined it as a program in which neighborhood residents of all ages—children, youth, elders, men and women—participated and grew into interdependence, each contributing from their unique station in life. But it didn't work as I hoped, because the social workers and ministers who invited us to work in the low-income community where their programs were situated did not know how to earn the trust of teenagers and young adults, who are the most energetic, vital elements of the community. The people they motivated were women, little children, and Uncle Toms.

Another challenge was that we did not know how to stage self-help building projects effectively. We needed a technology that did not yet exist, geared to

low skilled but highly spirited volunteers. As environmental designers we were accustomed to working with skilled laborers who could read blueprints and drive bulldozers. It was very painful when high hopes were dashed and followed by great disappointments. I learned a lot, and I think by now I can ask some decent questions about how to contribute to community building through a more efficient system of self-help construction of community open spaces.

Landscape Training Program for School Dropouts

Though many teenagers from inner-city neighborhoods participated in the building of neighborhood commons, they didn't really want to volunteer. They wanted to learn a skill and develop a career to have a better future. Having recognized this, I developed a landscape technician training program in 1962 sponsored by the Neighborhood Commons Nonprofit Corporation of Washington, D.C. Fifty school dropouts, mostly Afro-American, between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one, were enrolled in a program that lasted for a year. Funding by the Labor Department through the Manpower Development and Training Act enabled us to engage a staff of ten.

The focus of the training was the development of small-scale urban open spaces. We tried to impart not only gardening and horticultural skills, but the trainees learned carpentry, masonry, cement work, welding and operating heavy equipment such as bulldozers. These skills enabled them to find employment in afternoon or weekend hours on Capitol Hill, restoring residential landscapes for people who had moved back into that area. Usually landscape workers are not that skilled in handling cement work or welding.

One of our staff members, a wood carver, inspired the trainees to make beautiful sculptures of animals out of recycled lumber; and we were able to sell them at local galleries. They constructed these sculptures in a workshop in our center—a facility five blocks from the Capitol, which had been used for training firemen. The city government rented it to us for a \$1.00 a year. One day I dropped off a paint set at the center. One trainee, who was quite illiterate, was inspired and began to paint like an angel. After the program we were able to help him get a four-year scholarship to the Corcoran College of Art and Design.



At first the trainees did not like to dig in soil. They considered it demeaning since it reminded them of the hard agricultural labor their ancestors were forced to perform during slavery. Initially they were slow to start in the morning, having stayed up late playing cards and dancing. But once they started to make wood carvings and furniture for themselves, they worked day and night and sold their work at local galleries. When they began to participate in the

construction of neighborhood commons, often in neighborhoods where they lived, they developed a sense of pride and engagement in their work. And their self-esteem was strengthened by the new appreciation they received from their neighbors.

Observing them I realized that we were dealing with the new "leisure class." They had a different view of the world. They only wanted to do things that were deeply satisfying. Right now, unfortunately, there are many programs sponsored by the War on Poverty that enroll such youngsters in menial work with fancy job titles and uniforms and much coaxing and compelling.

By contrast I focused on developing a program based on an "environmental craft" technology to engage people with little skill or prior experience in creative work. This involves using machines to perform the backbreaking work, taking away drudgery and freeing human hands to leave their personal imprint on a product. A German company, for instance, developed a machine to break cobblestones into little pieces about three inches long for making mosaic walkways. Earlier, that work had been done by hand. Inserting these stones, often of different colors, in a bed of sand creates intricate patterns. This work requires little physical effort but a great deal of visual judgment. It is labor intensive without being physically draining. Work directed toward creating beauty is very satisfying.

In our training program we used an environmental



craft technology approach to produce prefabricated cement pavement blocks, which the trainees personalized by embedding different objects in their surfaces, often creating very beautiful patterns.

Heightening Environmental Quality

Environmental quality is heightened by the touch of human hands. Physical, human participation in environmental construction is the essence of craft. This work encourages self-expression and enables participants to leave their imprint upon their environment.



We were able to convince the Woodland Church at 42nd Street and Pine in Philadelphia that the \$1500 they planned to spend on an ivy patch and a privet hedge between the church and the sidewalk would be better used for paying young people and a craftsman who would impart skills to them to plant trees and lay a brick pavement for a commons.

“Don’t you want to extend a tangible welcome to the community?” I challenged

them, “So why don’t you create a place within which people can meet, those who come to the service, those who leave the service, and those who just walk by.” We also recycled an old granite SPCA horse trough that became a beautiful fountain.

At Melon Commons, a retired citizen imparted his wisdom and skill as a mason to neighborhood kids and American Friends summer work-campers, who were building a circular brick sandbox. Little children found broken bricks and made a beautiful circular pattern at the bottom of the sandbox, which we never expected. The fact that potential construction material was lying around inspired them and released their creativity.

This worked well for those who had the energy to collect and place the bricks but didn’t know how to mix cements. The kids found the material and built something that I’m really after. It’s a new kind of aesthetic based on open



structures that invite viewers to participate [like composer John Cage’s compositions of “planned indeterminacy”].

Kahn: The will to express is art, and art is never functional, but always describes something indefinable, To express means to express that which physical nature is unable to do. This is the great distinction between nature and man. The will to live is the will to trust. To express hate, love, integrity,

nobility, are all that are demanded by man. Although nature gave man a terrific violin on which to play things, it’s still completely inadequate. The nature of our institutions is the building point in the greater fight to emerge as humans who are greater than nature made us.

Need for New First Institutions

I can see that what you’re trying to do is completely parallel in this sense—that you do not accept the programming. Motivation makes all the difference. Motivation can lead to a program, but the program can merely motivate less. Most programs have no motivation behind them. They are simply extensions of things that have already been done. And the things they’re written from were written from things that had already been done—all the way down the line.

There is nothing that states it so creatively as the first monk, when he made the first monastery, which is nothing but remarkable. The individuation of spaces gave such a sense of environment for dedication. This is remarkable, the most remarkable. To me the coming of your first neighborhood commons is equally remarkable, and has equally remarkable connotations.

You will be able to sense the coming of the new institutions; These institutions must be welcomed as not being corrections, which are ways of perpetuating old institutions—therefore, of no value.

Linn: We need to focus on building a new, constructive way of work –as part of a new way of life. This will accelerate social change and social growth so it can keep pace with accelerated scientific and technological development and prevent random technological inventions such as cars and television sets from disrupting traditional habits and customs.

Kahn: We need new first institutions, but we don't have them, and the atmosphere is full of a desire for them. It takes someone to see it. And then he must surrender his right to having seen it, because it belongs to all humanity. Only in the way he expresses it, does it belong to him. I have the greatest reverence for those who can point to an institution. To me it's like pointing to living—not to life. Life is the broad existence. But living is patterning, designing, creating; it's all these things using life as a medium of creation. Living is a personal thing. That which can give living possibility is the sense or experience of an institution of man. Nothing will be accepted by man except that which is true to man. That's why the first institution is the inspiration for all others to come.

One is always primarily serving an institution, and an institution comes from inspiration. The most basic inspirations are the inspiration to live and the inspiration to learn. These are not surface things. When we consider the inspiration to learn, it may be that all we want to learn is how we are made. If we knew how we were made, we would know all the laws of the Universe. Everything that Nature makes must be made by the laws of the Universe, not by a few simple things nor by the isolation of a few laws of Nature, but by every single thing, be it the smallest thing or the largest. When you think that we are the custodians, really, of all the laws of the Universe, we really know everything. Only some of us don't have awareness about it

There is an inch of knowledge in all of us, but the inspiration to learn is really only a recapture of how we were made. In everything that Nature makes, it records how it was made. Now the inspirations of man, if you consider the inspiration to live, this "inspiration to live" is a revolt against that approximation of Nature that makes us live for only a short time. It is the most numbing revolt we have. You might say that this dichotomy between Nature, our physical nature, and our unconscious nature is the workshop of God.

Linn: I will always remember what you've said about the universal relationships at the heart of institutions: When you talk about schools, it's the relationship between rhythm and curiosity. When it's worship, it's a feeling of reverence and awe, a personal communication with the larger Universe. Unless we can ignite and intensify these relationships and make them more visible, their physical expression will not be that comprehensible to many. This, I feel, is the creative dilemma of

architecture. Unless people are very much in touch with this spark, they build obsolescence into their work.

Because of the work I did with school dropouts, I was invited to some national conferences on art education and later I was asked by the Office of Education to make a program submission to their Arts and Humanities branch.

Kahn: This Office of Education is a government agency?

Linn: The Office of Education is a government agency, and within it is a branch called "Arts and Humanities." These are the only people in the entire government structure who concentrate on the arts.

Kahn: When you say "Arts and Humanities," do they actually group them together?

Linn: They might ultimately have two separate foundations. They are trying to establish a national art foundation and a national humanities foundation. The art foundation would be for painting, sculpture and architecture and the humanities foundation for literary and performing arts.

Under the new Higher Education Bill, the Johnson Administration proposed the establishment of a new university-community extension service. In the past the university rendered such service to rural areas in the form of an agricultural extension; but, as a majority of the population shifts into the city, the universities are challenged to equip themselves to serve an urban population. Welfare services have already begun to broaden their base of operation, and new curricula are proposed. Temple University, for example, has established a human service curricula. The problem is that these welfare and mental health-oriented programs always focus on the weak links of the human ecological systems.

Our work would focus on building a new way of work to become part of the way things should be done constructively—part of a new way of life. I'm working on a proposal for a research program in the environmental arts based on establishing an environmental arts program as a university-community extension service. The program would bring architects and artists in general into contact with the problems of urbanism. The city is a laboratory, a workshop, and the university is defining new roles between itself and the city.

What the university has to do now is to deal with city administration and say, "We feel that this is our area and our students will explore it."

The urban environmental field does not yet have its own institutions for research and development. We are using all kinds of stuff and by products from other industries. We don't know how to stabilize our soil. So much has to be learned that can only be learned through experimentation. So I also want to suggest the establishment of neighborhood workshops. Such will give employment and volunteer opportunities to dedicated young professionals recently out of college.

You told me once that during the Depression you assembled around you forty men and all of you innovated environmental development. There is a need now for such a framework in which young professionals, who are not yet tied up with business and political structures, who are not yet part of the establishment, can innovate. Facilities need to be institutionalized so these people can really work.

Role of Volunteer Professionals in Low-Income Communities

Centralized city planning commissions can take care of the larger structural framework of the city. But, when populations become more dense, there is an increasing need for individual communities to receive more intensive and more directly related services by professionals, who are more intimately aware of and responsive to their needs and aspirations. We need to augment the professional service that exists now with a broadened base of community-based planning and design offices and workshops. Then the individual idiosyncrasies and ethnic backgrounds can be channeled into articulate and significant self-help expression assisted by professionals stationed within the territory of the community itself. These professionals will have at the same time an awareness of comprehensive city planning and the ability to integrate it with the fine-grain planning taking place on the community level. Centralized planners don't know the nuances of the community and will generalize too much. I'm not after makeshift. I'm not after junk playgrounds. On the contrary, I'm after a richness, an intricacy, a complexity and vibrancy that can only come about through a partnership of professionals and people who inhabit the spaces being designed and built.

Architects and artists and new kinds of cultural impresarios can serve as midwives and help into realization that which wants to be, but one has to give a helping hand to people as they adjust to new spaces. In order to sense that which wants to be, those professionals must be close to where people live, be able to look into their eyes and touch and smell and be witness of the

nuances of their behavior, symbolic expression, and spontaneous rituals. There are few great people who from greater remoteness from the living can sense the emerging institutions. This close proximity of the professional to the living analog, being exposed to the daily rhythm of people in their environments helps him constantly correct his understanding and prevents him from coming to the wrong abstractions and generalizations that arise from the infrequent visits of the professional from the remote centralized office.

Emergence of New Disciplines in Environmental Art

Once we move down to this level of work and to such close proximity and involvement with group dynamics, new clusters of disciplines have to aggregate around our work. These clusters involve, on one hand, disciplines concerned with group dynamics—mental health and anthropology—and, on the other hand, craft-oriented trainings that introduce our students to the nature and possibilities of material that they cannot experience right now in our colleges of design.

You remember when you visited one of our Neighborhood Commons building sites and saw your student, who as a designer directed that work project, being instructed in the mixing of cement by a local craftsman. You felt it was of great benefit to the students who are now taught these these duties without being able to experience their work on a craft level as they once could by apprenticing to a master. There should be an opportunities for students to be part of workshops, which we don't have right now in our course of studies.

What we need right now, like any other industry, like the fashion industry—we need environmental demonstration areas. And here the Poverty program to me is a forerunner because, unlike other industries, they are not in charge of assembly lines, but they are in charge of people. If they can develop their own research and development which no other industry has developed yet because they are assembly line oriented. Now, if the poverty community also develops environmental task forces, then these young men can really develop demonstration areas in the old area of the city, and in the new, and develop a new ritual of work.

Kahn: You need to think of a thing in two ways, You must not only think of it as confined to where you might use material, which was only thrown away. You see after all that's not the only type of material. It must be considered something which is

good in and of itself. In this way, the broader attitude, of the institution of quality, cannot be had by treating it as a local affair. It must be something that is cross-sectional too. You must make it applicable in Russia as well as here. If you can't do that, then it's too confined. It becomes not a matter of adjusting to conditions only.

A school must be applicable there as well as here. It must be important in that sense. Now in that sense, you see I'm just bringing it up to this point, from the standpoint of the landscape architect. But I feel this is something I would have to find a broader use for.

I learned much from my first teacher. He said, "Don't show all you know in one problem." You have to have this restraint. But you must express an institution that is growing, an institution of learning. We must build something that satisfies this, and satisfies the other. We must express dichotomous things. We must express them because the dichotomous things inspire. Unity to me as a word doesn't mean unity. Unity could mean fight.

Ecological or Judo Architecture

Linn: These neighborhood planning and design offices and workshop facilities will enable people to organize their resources in their hours of leisure and create a home out of their environment. We have to create a responsive environment. I call it "judo architecture" or ecological architecture. It has to be responsive to the forces of environment. Your houses are always sited to capture the light of the rising and setting sun rather than relying entirely on artificial illumination. When I worked with you on the design for the U.S. consulate in Angola [unfortunately, never built], you surrounded your building with a set of walls to deflect the glare of the sun. I had hoped that this corridor would have created enough of an air vector to organically air condition the building. Such ecologically aware man made environments constitute to me a much higher technological challenge than the technology that now creates hermetically sealed-off boxes. In a human ecological sense, the environment has to also be responsive to its users, and develop patina, not only brought about by weather conditions, but also by use. As a landscape architect I am accustomed to dealing with design elements that grew and aged with grace and dignity and so I feel this should be true of buildings as well. It is not enough to mold steel and concrete; one has to also make them grow.

The term "judo architecture" occurred to me because the essence of judo is a giving in to impact, knowing how to roll with the punch. Their [Japanese] houses, whose wood pillars are put on stone, not only prevent the wood from rotting, but also make it give in to the earth's tremors and, in their resilience, withstand them. Right now we discourage such responsiveness and we create a finite environment that changes only through destruction. We emphasize a virgin architecture, an untouchedness and, therefore, an unrelatedness. The question I keep asking myself is this: How can we create a responsive environment within which the expression of those who use it enrich it but do not deform it?

I think that when the present [Johnson] administration speaks about natural beauty, conservation, and urban development, the quality they have in mind is what we can see in Central Europe right now. They are aspiring toward an elaborate environment that relegates people to a passive existence. I saw this in Germany and other countries, You see the signs "Don't Step on the Grass" and "Don't Pick Any Flowers." There is nothing for people to do except sit, stare, and walk politely. Children are to be seen and not heard. Much energy is depressed, and people seem unhappy and angry.

Kahn: I think your work can and should inspire a real sense of a program for urbanism. I call it urbanism for want of a better word. "Urbanism" immediately makes the mind feel as heavy as lead. You don't think any more because it's all finished. Urbanism needs to be redefined. That's one of the most important things that you can do, Karl, I really think so.

Collectivization vs. Community

Linn: In high density populations there are only two alternatives when forming social organizations. Either collectives are developed, or communities unfold. Martin Buber defines collectives as a condition where people march as a multitude side by side towards the common goal, at the sacrifice of the individual. In community, by contrast, despite the multitude, people turn toward one another. The threat of collectivization endangers even the American social structure as long as people live as strangers next to each other and watching television passively. The Russians deliberately create spaces in which the multitudes are gathered to create collectives. They are trying to prevent a smile from being transmitted from one lip to the other by causing suspicion and fear. This creates psychological walls

between people, which ultimately freeze into tangible walls, like the Berlin Wall. Actually in America there is a renaissance of the Radburn tradition [Radburn was a New Jersey subdivision designed by Clarence Stein in 1928 that provided both private and common spaces for its residents and separated pedestrians from vehicular traffic, through pedestrian underpasses.]

America builds today an architecture of community. Our large public facilities, such as sports arenas, do not constitute an architecture of community but rather an architecture of collective, because people watch events as passive spectators participating as an anonymous mass. The architecture of community consists of home associations and cluster housing with restaurants and laundromats—much of it under private ownership.

In my own work I extended this trend to include public land and make it available for community use to people rich or poor under conditions of tenancy. I worked with public agencies and helped them specify the conditions of insurance policies needed. I have worked so far in about six cities. Land came from the National Park Service, from different city municipal governments and from the Public Housing Administration.

In early days, community developed through the barn raising efforts of farmers who came to each other's assistance because no one could do it alone. In those days there was an existential urgency because they had to provide food and shelter for their families. Now this urgency does not exist any more. So we need people who can envision and conceive vibrant images of new "barns" that will inspire people to get together and reach out and build in common and erect a scaffold which will provide a station for all members, challenging their uniqueness into an orchestrated effort. The Watts Towers in Los Angeles, although built by one man over forty years, is a symbolic model of what can be done once the energies of a group are compounded.

Community building also happens in the classroom. I don't think one could teach any class without considering the group dynamics. Unless students are challenged to engage in mutual pursuits and so become dependent on each other, they will never learn as a class, and student will be pitted against student in competitiveness and strife.

Constructive Channeling of Violent Energies

Another aspect of the Environmental Arts program that I would like to develop has to do with violence and its constructive expression. The increased level of tension today, the reduction of fear of authority, and heightened sexual excitation through popular culture and advertising—the twist having replaced the waltz—makes all of us walk around like powder kegs waiting to explode. I visited New York, and saw in Harlem an exciting project, Haryou (Harlem Youths) Opportunity Unlimited. They focus all their attention on youth, challenging teenagers and young adults to assume community leadership. In Harlem, the older folks are tired and discouraged. I feel this challenge holds true for any youth.

We deal not only with the violence of individuals but the compounded violence of gangs and groups, and need to provide channels for their expression. The social energy system needs new combustions chambers. Our social organization most likely parallels in its growth the development from steam engine to jet engine propulsion system. And we can think of architecture as providing the appropriate combustion chambers.

Importance of Youth

The environment constitutes a framework, a vessel, that can channel and contain intense energies, not of one kind but of many, and channel the multitude into a form of synchronized expression. We don't even know what the institution of youth is today. The kids who are teenagers right now are the first ones who were born into an atomic era, and as such feel an existential anxiety which none of us ever experienced from birth. We spent our earlier years in an era in which the survival of the human race was taken for granted. Kids today want to live much more imminently; they don't know what tomorrow will bring. They want to be put to the test and give of themselves as adults. In addition to which, there is so much talk in this country of youthfulness, and the retirement age goes down every year. So teenagers don't know who they are, and don't know what to dream about that will inspire them to reach out.

We are still creating an environment that excludes everyone but wage earners. Teenagers are given makeshift arrangements; so are ladies and retired people. At every street corner, there is a gang of young men who symbolically and tangibly offer themselves to society; they want to serve, but there are no takers. Youth are giving leadership to all the new cultural expression of society today. And the

school dropouts should be given honorary degrees in education. Once they started leaving school en masse, all of us scholars followed them and started to revise curricula. Now everybody joins the bandwagon, and still these youth are considered to be of low intelligence and low mentality. Youth started the Civil Rights Movement, and all the ministers went after them. In Chicago, I met some teenagers who started Teenage Talents, a very successful theatrical group. They refused money from any foundation. They did not want any money with strings attached to it, or red tape. They composed music overnight, not knowing that professionals would have taken much longer.

I would like to start a behavior lab which would require all of us to go down to life and see how it is lived in all its subtleties – not just going down once or twice and then generalizing about the whole rhythm of life, but going down in the morning and at night, weekday and weekend, summer and snow, and really see what people want to say, and then help them create an environment that would dignify and ennoble their existence and help them to a crystallization of that which they express in their spontaneous behavior, spending their days in a makeshift facility.

There are teenagers at every street corner, but they have no home. In Harlem they were forced to create a home for their organization. They converted a basement into a center with workshops and offices. They have a HARYOU garden, and the teenagers have a coffee shop that they run themselves.

Kahn: I myself see the juvenile delinquency problem as you do. I see it as stemming from a gross dissatisfaction, and a high sense of inspiration. The inspirations of man are stronger in a violent person than in a complacent person. Naturally, the mode of expression must, in that case, be in keeping with social mores. I read in the paper about two or three people ganging up to, as they say, “clean somebody,” which resulted in the death of a young boy, who was completely unaware of what was going to happen to him. This must be compared to the whole course of a war.

Every era can be measured by the creation of the new institutions of that era. In the institutions lie the germs of new institutions. Almost every generation has something in it that must demand a restatement of every institution. Only by restating institutions can one really revise the program that an architect gets in his plan. This is his first duty, aside from the details of treating space. Architecture is

the place of the institution.

I read an article recently “Is the university good enough for students?” That is the right question, not “Is the student good enough for the university?” The programs at the universities must change in the same way that our streets must change, and our land must change.

Spirit of Service

We speak about the places where we can give of ourselves by re-expressing what one might call the spirit of knighthood—not in its historic sense, a lot of that was mere bigotry. I can give you one example of the true spirit of knighthood. When I was recently in India I was told by the Minister of Education that they had a hundred applicants to study chemistry at the University of Takada. You may imagine that this is a lot of students because there is such a small proportion of students who even think of education in India, so this hundred students is nothing but phenomenal. The Minister there was faced with the fact that he had only ten benches to offer to a hundred applicants for chemistry. He gave them a very stiff exam in the English language, and he emphasized the stiffness of the exam, to make sure that he had the right people.

I reminded him after he had spoken and had felt the powers of his righteousness that I didn’t remember anything that the ten best students did in our class. Those that did express themselves, and those that were always late, and sometimes were marked down because they were late, are the only ones I know now and value. So there’s no indication that the examination method is of any value in the emergence of significant talents. Not at all. So I said to him, “Well, of course, maybe you have to use your examination and do pick the ten best,” I said, “but wouldn’t it be a good idea, because of the privilege of the ten, that you demand that those ten teach nine others? And that the privilege of a bench and the teaching of the nine others, mean he doesn’t have to take the final exam.”

After about ten minutes he said, “You know, it would work!” So I said, “now since you’re so receptive, I’ll give you another idea! Suppose you had also, as a privilege of being taught, which is marvelous to have in your possession, suppose the students were obliged to go to the village to teach everyone in the village to write his name? Do you realize how curious the villager would be to see how his name was written? And, you know, they would all learn to read the newspaper almost immediately.”

We need a kind of will to live the education, because you want to live the inspiration to express. Not to express as much as to learn. But the will to express is art, and art is never functional but always describes something undefinable, even for the impoverished. It is the greatest inspiration that we own, even greater than the inspiration to live.

When you say, "What is a School of Architecture?" I always envision a place where somehow you have walls you can defile. I always felt it should be a place where nobody is inhibited by anybody else. Nothing precious. But a variety of light, and low and high spaces. Nothing to tell you where something should be. Or where music should be played —simply an environment which in every sense is a kind of landscape.

When I find a better answer to something or a better expression of something, nothing stands in my way except to express that very thing. I always think in terms of how I can serve the Institution of Man. None of the thoughts that serve the Institutions of Man are complete; it is almost a marvel that they even exist. The most exciting part of my work today is this sense of the new institution. I sense it in every building I do today. I sense the institution first and ask myself, "Am I serving an inspiration?"

Linn: As technology accelerates everything tremendously, society has to accelerate itself too. It has to accelerate its change in order to keep pace; otherwise we constantly respond with makeshift arrangement to any accidental technological invention—the car, the television, the laundromat—which completely disrupts tradition, ritual, and habit. Now in order to regain a 300-year projection and get ourselves out of the era of Jules Verne science fiction, the institution of art has to find a way within which it can compound intuition to bring about a composite view of life-to-be, which each artist alone, pitted against the complexity of today's existence, is incapable of producing.

Years ago you told me "Karl, you're running too fast—when you worry about survival, the only thing you can do is to serve life"—even though the prophets of doom might tilt the whole thing in the wrong direction. How can we create a framework for the prophets of hope to work jointly, so that senior citizens are not outcasts, and the teenagers are not treated with lack of respect, as in "Go play some ball, kids," but are really recognized for what they are and want to be today.

And little children—the tiny ones—are not just put behind chain link fences and given some toys to distract them. They really want to learn.

Somebody very wise in Chicago told me the other day that skill training should take place before the kids get into puberty. Once in puberty their problems are authority, and then they should be treated as adults. How can you have autonomy, each being equal, and have them each work with one another? This needs a tremendous vision; but, once we accelerate, once there is an open structure to grow and new rituals are conceived, then it makes sense.

Kahn: These things are important, Karl. You have a sense of people, which is a way in which you can derive a new program. Whether they're white, Negro, or yellow, it makes absolutely no difference. I would not worry that one type or combination is more right than the others. That problem, you might say, is in the department of circumstance. Things change. How accidental our existences are really and how full of influence by circumstance. Remember what you said about not thinking correctively, but positively instead. You need to think that there is actually a new way of expressing a new institution instead of how to correct the present one. The creation of a new institution naturally buries those things that were problems in the old.

In the making of something, the circumstances can never be anticipated. Even some of the plans, which say that this can happen, must all somehow be reserved. What must be created is something that is infallible. Something, in a sense of the institution, where these things can happen. This is expressed architecturally, in space, whether you cover the rooms or not. It must be also created in such a way that it is anonymous enough for any man to be comfortable in it.

Karl, you have within yourself a tremendous amount of real experience, which you have gained from facing difficulties. My daughter, who lives in New York now has this terrible time getting started. She plays flute and many others play and it's hard to distinguish because so many play better. She only plays well. So at one point, she was thinking of going to Chicago. I told her not to. I told her to go where the going was really hard. What you get from this is much more, though the opportunity is less. Momentarily. You'll come on better in the long run.

You've got to do it, just do it. And out of your inspiration will come the building, and that will inspire others. People will feel the institution and will say

that we are living in an era in which this acceleration that you speak about will bring about the most beautiful fullness of life. You will be able to sense the coming of the new institutions. These institutions must be welcomed, not as corrections which are ways of perpetuating old institutions, but as something new, that which wants to become.

Think of a neighborhood where you can buy cut flowers—not in a store but in your neighborhood. Life in all aspects can be the basis from which all value can emerge. All forms of life must be brought to consciousness. To plant things properly is vital. If I only knew the consciousness of a rose, that would be tremendously useful. The mechanism we have lets everything come into us but doesn't distinguish between the big things and the little things. But the simple consciousness of a flower, which only exists for a season and enjoys that one moment of consciousness! To understand that would be marvelous.

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