Nature of Place and Dwelling: A House on Lake Mary Ronan

Meghan Mary Hanson
Nature of Place and Dwelling:
A House on Lake Mary Ronan

Meghan Mary Hanson
NATURE OF PLACE AND DWELLING: 
A House on Lake Mary Ronan

by

Meghan Mary Hanson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment 
of the requirements for the degree 
of 
Masters of Architecture

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY 
Bozeman, Montana

May, 2001
APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by
Meghan Mary Hanson

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

Ralph Johnson, Committee Chair ___________________________ Date _________
Ferd Johns, Second Advisor _______________________________ Date _________
Joanne Mannell Noel, Chair _______________________________ Date _________
Clark Llewellyn, Director _________________________________ Date _________
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master’s Degree at Montana State University, I agree that the School of Architecture shall make it available to borrowers.

If I indicated my intention to copyright this thesis (paper) by including a copyright notice page, copying is allowable only for scholarly purposes, consistent with “fair use” as prescribed in the U.S. Copyright Law. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this thesis (paper) in whole or in parts may be granted only by the copyright holder.

Signature

______________________________

Date

______________________________
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THESIS STATEMENT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling and the four-fold</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolism</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Place</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duality</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apollo and Dionysus</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Labyrinth</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaching the Immeasurable</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Place in History</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Place</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History / Location</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation / Wildlife</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Images</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Statement</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precedent Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Corbusier</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Kahn</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Correa</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Cezanne</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This thesis seeks an understanding of self and place through built form, specifically those buildings we dwell within. As humans in a modern world, we are faced with thousands of stimulants and symbols that are taking the place of actual experiences and objects. Life is constantly moving away from a connection to this earth. I believe that through an examination of ourselves within the world we can begin to have a true sense of our place and meaning within it. As mortals, we reside on the earth, under (and in constant reference to) the sky. Our buildings house and protect us while serving to relate us to a larger whole, what Martin Heidegger names the divinity, or the holy. He refers to four elements as the four-fold: humanity, divinity, earth, and sky. Through a cognizant relation within this four-fold a true sense of ‘being’ on this earth at this time can begin to emerge.
Many different cultures and religions have contemplated this questioning of where and how humanity exists within the world. I intend to look at its interpretations in Greek mythology and ancient Indian Vedic Theory. In relatively modern time, philosophers such as Heidegger, Nietzsche, Baudrillard; as well as architects like Charles Correa, Louis Kahn, and Le Corbusier, have provided insight into this theory of humanity’s place in the world.

I am interested in how this idea of humanity’s place will present itself within the built form of a house. The house will serve as my vehicle to explore this concept. It will be a dwelling for my family. The site we have chosen is on Lake Mary Ronan, in northwest Montana. The site will become the location for a specific place that gathers this fourfold and thus gives presence to it. For Heidegger, a location comes into existence by virtue of the built form and the human activity that takes place there.

Architecture is the physical reality of how we see ourselves within a greater whole. This thesis is about how we place ourselves on the earth in relation to our sense of place and experience. Science and measurement provide one way we view our connection to our surroundings. This is not the only way however. It is increasingly more difficult to retain a sense of self within the modern bombardment of the hyper-real and the symbolic. It is my belief that to live a true and meaningful life on this earth we must have an awareness of this symbol based reality and be able once again to connect to the earth and its presence. I believe through studying and understanding our role within the fourfold we will have a true relationship with all that exists within our world.

Dwelling and the Fourfold

“Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth.”

In order to dwell in the manner to which Heidegger is referring, we must have building. However, not all buildings can house this dwelling. The building must gather the world and relate it to the earth. As dwelling requires a connection to the earth, we can also assume that building requires dwelling. Thus the two, building and dwelling, are part of the same. Heidegger furthers his definition of dwelling when he says “the fundamental character of dwelling is sparing and preserving.”

This idea of “sparing and preserving” must be inherent in our building. We can think of this sparing as an allowing of something to retain its own nature. We preserve this nature when we dwell in a conscious manner, when our buildings relate both physically and spiritually to their surroundings.

I think that to be within the experiential and sensual realm of being, we must analyze how we build. “Great art makes manifest the truth of being as a whole.”

Great art, of which architecture is (should be) a part, presents the earth within the world. When the art is successful in this it becomes part of a greater whole.

To begin to understand this we must back away from the narrow view of the world shown through science and symbol and allow a larger inclusive view to stand forth. This view, I believe will include science and the symbol, but will contrast them with something else - something that lies between the core self and its deep-rooted connection to earth and spirit. Herein lies the fourfold, the term used by Heidegger to include the elements that come together and create world: earth, sky, divinity, and mortals.

3. ibid, 148.
4. I believe ‘surroundings’ include the place, people, activities, and divinities therein.
6. Refer to the Duality section of this thesis for an explanation of earth and world.
Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up into plant and animal. When we say earth, we are already thinking of the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering flitter of the stars, the year’s seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of day, the gloom and glow of night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether. When we say sky, we are already thinking of the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out of the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment. When we speak of the divinities, we are already thinking of the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

The mortals are the human beings. They are called mortals because they can die. To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies, and indeed continually, as long as he remains on the earth, under the sky, before the divinities. When we speak of mortals, we are already thinking of the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four.

Martin Heidegger
Poetry, Language, Thought
If we can begin to make things that arouse a feeling of connection to the earth, both in its ability to house and protect us, and in our conservation (sparing and preserving), I believe we will discover a true sense of being. This sense of being exists within the fourfold and simultaneously has the invaluable knowledge of our world brought to us through a scientific and symbolic understanding. For our house on Lake Mary Ronan, I believe ideas of connecting to the land, water and sky as well as human activity will need to relate both to the fourfold and to science. To begin to understand this context, I studied some of humanity’s relations to the dualities that exist within the world.
Does truth reside in imagery or in place? This question deals with dualistic realities relating to place. One sees place through detached images and the other sees place as an experiential actuality. Both of these realities can of course be taken to their extremes, however, to me, a place is best understood through a combination of both. It seems though, that we as a society have become fully reliant on the image to replace that which it is representing. The sign or symbol becomes the first thing known; often the reality is never actually experienced. The real is now portrayed as an effect of the sign, it becomes secondary and, if experienced at all, is typically after exposure through simulation.⁷ Jean Baudrillard argues that we (modern society) are in a 3rd order simulation – the simulacra. Simulacra he defines as reproductions of objects or events that have become completely separated from their referents. The sign has been released from its former (1st and 2nd order) obligation to relate to reality; it has become its own reality. It is its own reality in the sense that “from now on signs will exchange among themselves exclusively, without interacting with the real.”⁸ Thus the place or object is not understood in a sensual, experiential way. What can a ‘real’ experience reveal that the symbol can not? And does an image or a symbol reveal the same truth about place as an actual experience? If we apply this question to the exploration of being, do we actually have to ‘be’ in a place to consider ourselves a part of the place? Or has humanity become so detached as to no longer need place in our core understanding of ourselves in this world?

---

In typical modern suburbia, rows of identical or mirrored houses line manicured streets. The nearby surrounding areas of many Montana towns, such as North 19th St. Bozeman, have become overgrown with this suburban housing. These houses have become the standard for “home” to many families today. The symbol has replaced reality, it has become more important than a house that relates to its inherent natural surroundings and to the people who live there. It does not gather the fourfold. For Heidegger, it no longer exists in the “realm of the gods” and thus cannot house true dwelling. The house no longer has a sense or relation to its place. It has become a non-place. Architecture, which I believe should exist largely in the sensual and experiential realm, is now fashioned after a symbol of what architecture should be. We have forgotten the reasons why the symbol stood for a good home. The symbol stands and our reality (the referent) constantly changes. It is structured from a pre-made model that has no grounding or relation to earth and its context. As such, it has become part of the simulacra: the hyper-real that has taken the place of its referent.9

SCIENCE AND PLACE

Plato believed that this world could be understood through scientific analysis. In this theory, nature could be revealed as a mathematical system adhering to the laws discovered and set forth by humanity. While I believe that this scientific understanding of our world is invaluable in the knowledge it presents to us, I think that humanity has become too dependent on this “understanding” to explain everything. The scientific realm is overriding our senses. What we perceive is constantly being rationalized against what we know. Descartes was once criticized as having risen “to the plane of pure intellect without passing through the gates of the senses, the way fixed by nature”.

Science is the simplification of a complex world. Through it, we view only a small, ordered sense. It does nothing to help us relate spiritually to our world. These scientific understandings lead to a prescribed view of nature as ‘landscape’, separating humanity from our surroundings. We see nature as controllable and understandable – it is there to be used as a means for our ends. Heidegger explains science as “correct”, but not “true”. It is a generalization that we see as the sole explanation of our world. Science has become ultimate. I believe to be part of the world and have a complete understanding, science cannot be our end definition. Something must reveal that which science conceals. The measurable must have an equally important immeasurable.

And he replied “Return to your science,
Which has it that, in measure of a thing’s perfection,
It feels both more of pleasure and of pain.

Virgil

Dante Alighieri, The Inferno
All material in nature, the mountains and the streams and the air and we, are made of Light which has been spent, and this crumpled mass called material casts a shadow, and the shadow belongs to Light.

Louis Kahn
Between Silence and Light
“Why so hard?” the charcoal once said to the diamond; “for are we not close relations?”

Why so soft? O my brothers, thus I ask you; for are you not – my brothers?

Why so soft and unresisting and yielding? Why is there so much denial and abnegation in you hearts? So little fate in your glances?

And if you will not be fates, if you will not be inexorable; how can you – conquer with me?

And if your hardness will not flash and cut and cut to pieces; how can you one day – create with me?

Friedrich Nietzsche
Duality

A dichotomy can be seen between world and the earth. This comparison can begin to explain the need for both the measurable and immeasurable to exist in true being and dwelling. World implies something much larger (physically) than earth. It can include the earth and also the universe (the earth is only one example of a world). The world is the space whereupon we as humans create place. It is the backdrop that allows the “being of beings”. Here world becomes a framework for our existence. We define the world through our scientific understanding of it, and this has given us very useful information. “To understand one’s world is to understand fundamentally what there is”.

This appreciation however cannot exist without a parallel understanding of earth. If we can see world as the context upon which we create place, then the earth will allow us (and our created place) to relate to the immeasurable. When we ask someone to “come back (or down) to earth” we are asking that person to return to reality. This reality I believe needs to be understood as different from a reality created through symbol. It is that which can be experienced first hand, physically, sensually and spiritually. I believe what we create becomes very important in this context. It is this work that should present the earth. Webster’s Dictionary defines earth as: “the planet upon which we live, as distinct from sky, as distinct from heaven or hell”. Not any planet, but the one that houses us, humanity. The earth stands alongside sky and divinity. Thus it remains to humanity and our creations to provide the final link allowing this fourfold to be realized and placed upon this earth.

14. ibid
15. ibid, 46.
APOLLO AND DIONYSUS

The earth-world duality can also be understood by looking at the similar duality of Apollo and Dionysus as understood by Friedrich Nietzsche. Here we see Apollo as the measurable or world, and Dionysus as the immeasurable or earth. Apollo was born directly into adulthood. Upon drinking the nectar of the gods he grew instantly. He never experienced childhood wonderment and fascination. Soon after being born, he set out to locate his shrine. The chosen site already inhabited by the oracle of Gaea(Gaia), guarded by the female dragon Python. Apollo slew the dragon and located his shrine. Gaea, in Greek mythology is mother earth, the earth personified as a female. The nurturing, essence of life expressed through Gaea is now replaced by Apollo. What then does Apollo endorse? He is the god of medicine and prophecy, a protector, a punisher of evil, and founder of towns. In several myths, he kills or rapes humans reputed to have a connection to Gaea or other goddess cults.\(^{17}\)

Dionysus is Apollo's opposite. Born out of Zeus’s passion for the mortal Semele, he was raised as a female to hide him from the wrath of Hera. Once grown, Hera sent him into a state of madness in which he traveled the world spreading wine, joy and mysticism. His grandmother Rhea (daughter of heaven and Gaea) later cured him of his madness and initiated him into her mysteries. He continued his jovial ways and developed a following of merry people known as Bacchantes. Dionysus also resurrected his mother Semele (moon) from the underworld.\(^{18}\) He clearly represents a connection to the earth, he is the god of fertility. Semele can be seen as a reinstatement of the mother earth.

For Heidegger this duality of Apollo and Dionysus is the “clarity of presentation” contrasted by “holy pathos”.\textsuperscript{19} I believe Dionysus is the element we lack in modern society. He is the opposite of reason and science, being instead the immeasurable and sensual.

Nietzsche’s Apollonian – Dionysian distinction provides an explanation through which we can begin to clarify true dwelling and being. Much of modern society, and specifically modern building, has followed Apollo and abandoned Dionysus. We are Apollonian in nature and thus fully rooted in a systematic, logical and scientific understanding of our surroundings. I believe we have left the earth out of world, and forsaken the immeasurable in favor of complete measurability. Now nothing appears sacred or mystified. Nothing stops us from turning everything (including ourselves) into resource. We have even created symbols of what humanity ‘should’ look like. These images, highly publicized through media, are generally impractical and unattainable for the majority of the population.\textsuperscript{21} Yet these images are widely viewed and accepted by the public through popular magazines and television. As models and symbols have come to constitute the world we live in, we do not tend to see the effects of our actions as they relate to the real (vs. symbolic) world. I believe that humanity has excluded the immeasurable in being and in creating (here - architecture). This exclusion of the immeasurable has been detrimental to our being.

Dwelling as a human being on this earth is impossible from within an entirely scientific world. \textit{On this earth} means with reference to the immeasurable, the Dionysian. Thus the tension of opposites, measurable - immeasurable, Apollo- Dionysus, symbol - sensual, is an essential part of comprehending true dwelling.

\textsuperscript{19} Young, \textit{Heidegger’s Theory of Art}, 40-41. Heidegger follows Holderlin’s explanation here. Young suggests that this clarity of presentation and holy pathos are identical to

\textsuperscript{20} Heidegger, \textit{Poetry, Language, Thought}, 93-94

\textsuperscript{21} Kellner, \textit{Jean Baudrillard}, 79
Nietzsche’s labyrinth is not meant for literal translation. It is not a physical labyrinth he seeks, but rather one that refers to the depth of the human soul. There is a “lack of compatibility between our labyrinthine souls and our buildings”. I believe this labyrinth can help again in a search for true dwelling and being. The maze leads to the Dionysian depths of the world. It is a complicated network of passages. When in a maze, it is impossible to understand one’s place in the typical orientation, unless we can see it from above. It becomes an experiential journey. For further understanding of this labyrinth I followed Nietzsche back to a Greek myth - that of Theseus and Ariadne. In this myth, Theseus was faced with the task of killing the Minotaur who lived inside the labyrinth at the Palace of Minos at Knossos. Ariadne, half-sister of the Minotaur, fell in love with Theseus and gave him a magic ball of thread to follow into and out of the maze. After killing the Minotaur and successfully exiting the labyrinth, he married Ariadne only to give her up shortly thereafter to Dionysus.
Theseus is described in several myths as being a follower of Apollo. In this story, he conquers the center of the labyrinth (Minotaur) and thus destroys the mystery of it. He is aided by a female who later deserts him for Dionysus (desire, holy pathos). Ariadne’s thread can be seen both as a lead into the abyss and the path out of it. It is the thread of life that weaves both the measurable and immeasurable together. Dionysus was Theseus’s rival. It is interesting here that Ariadne follows Dionysus and in a sense reenters the labyrinth that Theseus destroyed.\footnote{Young, in Heidegger’s Theory of Art defines Dionysus as that which lies beyond conceptual articulation, similar to our understanding of a labyrinth.}

I believe that modern society has relinquished this labyrinth. Descartes thought that he could replace this labyrinth of the world with an ordered cosmos. He led us out of the labyrinth and into an understandable, ordered world, one that, unlike the world Ariadne chose, leaves Dionysus lost in the labyrinth and follows Apollo (Theseus).\footnote{Harries, Nietzsche’s Labyrinth, 40-41.}
APPROACHING THE IMMEASURABLE THROUGH THE FOURFOLD

Can we in modern society reenter the labyrinth and (re)locate Dionysus? I believe that this reality, unlike the measurable, is constantly fleeting and fluid, making it much harder to grasp. Furthermore, when we try to grasp the immeasurable through conventional means, we again revert to something we measure. What then is this immeasurable? I believe the answer can be found in the second half of the dichotomies explained: earth, Dionysus, holy pathos, and the sensual. These are best absorbed by explaining the duality they exist within. By understanding their opposite we can begin to place their context. The immeasurable exists within the labyrinthine soul of mortals. By ignoring the presence of the immeasurable we are left longing for something unexplainable. For Heidegger, the immeasurable lies in the in-between: “the upward to the sky as well as the downward to the earth. We leave the nature of the dimension without a name“. This nameless dimension is where the fourfold exists. The place where, in this world, the earth is put forth in relation to sky, divinity and humanity. This place for me is the realm of architecture - the built form. I believe that the home is the essential place where we can begin again to connect to this fourfold. We relate ourselves to our surroundings by building. From this I believe we can begin relating to the immeasurable through an understanding of the fourfold and its manifestation within building.
I believe that both realities (both halves of the former dualities) must be present in dwelling. “Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth”.27 We are on the earth in two ways. One way constantly seeks answers and systems that can explain humanity and its physical surroundings. This manner of dwelling is once removed from the earth. We do not see ourselves as part of it, but separate. All elements are unrelated spiritually. Science and symbols simplify and define this world for us. The other, which I believe has been largely abandoned in modern society, views the world holistically, put forth through a combination of all inseparable elements. My belief is that both halves must be present. The combination of the two realities becomes much more than either one alone. To regain this, we must emphasize design and building that address the immeasurable. We are successful in this when a place give the feeling of connection - when it houses the “holy pathos”. The site on Lake Mary Ronan, to me, has much inherent potential to do this. Vegetation and views allow me to participate in the natural connections between land, water and sky. The quiet, natural surroundings and sense of historic inhabitation begin to express the “holy pathos”. A house here, I believe, should be focused on the creation of a place hat will allow these things to stand forth in relation to each other and the inhabitants (my family) that exist within it.

27. ibid, 148.
The connection of earth, sky, mortals, and divinity was coined the fourfold by Martin Heidegger, however the ideas inherent here have been explored by humanity since the beginning of building (and probably before). Many cultures have explained their relations to place, dwelling, and being through these elements.

“...That stellar concave spreading overhead, softly absorbed into me rising so free interminably high, stretching east, west, north, south – and I, though but a point in the centre below, embodying all.”

- Walt Whitman

Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth
The ancient Greeks created an elaborate mythology that explained their place in the world. The earth was seen as the home of mortals, while the gods resided in the sky – atop Mount Olympus. The two were never entirely separated however; they constantly referenced each other. Stories of the god’s lives and interactions were examples for human behavior. I believe that these gods however never became symbols such as we have today. These gods reflected human traits and emotions (or it can be argued that humans reflected the gods). An example of this mythological connection follows.

Mnemesyne (Memory) was the daughter of Uranus and Gaea. Uranus and Gaea being the sky and earth. Mnemesyne and Zeus (ruling divinity) in turn parented the nine Muses. These muses were seen as the guardians of nine humanities: history, lyric poetry, comedy, tragedy, song and dance, love poetry, hymnals, astrology, and epic poetry. Here we see that the coupling of earth and sky creates memory, which then combined with divinity to produce the humanities.

The ancient Greek temples still stand as physical proof of these beliefs. Each one is exact and measured. However, their placement and orientation were directly linked to the cosmos and gods of the time. The buildings actually ‘housed’ the gods, or statues of the gods. Unlike today, these symbols had a direct link to their referent. I believe there was hardly any distinction between the two. The temple also addresses humanity’s connection to earth and sky. Heidegger writes; “standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground”. It does not stand anywhere, but there, in a specific place. He then goes on to describe the temple resting on the rocky ground (earth), which is in constant reference to the sky. The temple stands between the two and provides the place where gods and man come together.

Greek Parthenon
Vatsu Purusha Mandala
The Indian Vedic theory is an ancient philosophy of architecture that evolved in the Hindu culture. It is a (somewhat literal) translation of humanity’s relation to the sky and divinity - termed Vastu Vidya. The Vatsu Purusha is the Cosmic Man – humanity’s connection to the cosmos. This cosmic man is seen as being superimposed on the building site by ruling divinities. Each space is related to a certain part or attribute of the body. Each has a different cosmic force and thus a different functionality. The body, or heart of the building, was always central. Most often it was an open air space such as a courtyard. This allowed a visual connection to the heavens. According to this ancient theory, astrology and architecture are part of the same tradition. Astrology deals with the cosmic level of planets and the stars. Ayurveda is the study of the relatively microscopic level of the human body. Architecture is created out of the two studies – it is the intermediate sheath of man-made construction. Its existence lies between the mortal and the sky. I believe this is an attempt to integrate humanity into a larger whole. Vatsu Vidy suggests that the body references the sky, that it derives energy and balance from it.

The theory introduced here will be explained in more detail and as it relates to my site later in this thesis.

31. ibid, 80.
These Greek and Hindu theories are two examples from ancient times of how humanity saw itself within the world. The personifications and interactions of earth, sky, and divinity prove a sense of interconnection that was present for these cultures. Often the God(s) gave literal examples of acceptable and unacceptable lifestyles. Through a direct relation to surroundings and beliefs, humanity was provided with a way of life driven by immersion within the fourfold. As we move through time, we step farther and farther away from this relationship. Baudrillard explores this evolution through the history of signs and symbols defined in three stages.32 The first stage is that of the Primitive world. Life was derived from actual experience. Elements of signification were not important. The second stage shows images now beginning to be substituted for the real. Written word becomes a substitute for spoken language, however it still has a direct link to its referent. During the Medieval times, systems of ordering and understanding the world were explored. These still however had a connection to the real - the symbol had a literal, more important object or experience it referred to. During the Age of Enlightenment, we separated ourselves even more from the fourfold in favor of a highly organized scientific view of the world. This view separated humanity from nature. It provided us with a set of laws defining life that I believe do not have an inclusive nature. We cannot be part of the fourfold if we view ourselves as a separate entity from the rest of the world. In being ‘enlightened’ within the symbolic realm, we have forgotten about the immeasurable. Today, much of the way we live is based on a science that no longer has a direct tie to actually being and dwelling on this earth.

Thus I believe that through an understanding of the fourfold and its ability to gather the earth unto the world, we can begin to balance the measurable with a reconstitution of the immeasurable.

32. Kellner, Jean Baudrillard, 77-78.
Understanding Place

To become familiar with a place we must inhabit and dwell within that landscape. We must know the subtleties of the earth, understand the seasons and revere the space. At the same time something must always remain a mystery, a constant curiosity with no physical answer. For Heidegger, this is man’s self-measure against the godhead. “Man’s dwelling depends on an upward-looking measure-taking of the dimension, in which the sky belongs just as much as the earth”.

I believe that this mystery is our perception of the non-manifest world. Thus man’s stay on the earth under the sky, with constant reference to the divinities, becomes a departure point for architecture that truly addresses a sense of being and dwelling. Only when we have a meaningful relationship with the site can we really see it as “place”. As a means to this end, architecture can begin to clarify our sense of being in a landscape. It allows us to develop a strong connection between ourselves dwelling in a place and the place itself. The built can begin to give presence to the un-built, and vice versa. Architecture will “open a world and at the same time set this world back again on earth”.

Phenomenology in architecture is a study of site that relies on more than solely the scientific view. It constitutes a “return to things”. In this definition a thing is real and experiential (it is not a symbol). Thus phenomenology attempts to balance the immeasurable with the measurable. It is the view of inclusion within the world versus a prescribed view of nature. During the Enlightenment, the world was set apart from humanity to better allow its dissection and study. This resulted in a “detached distance between the human and phenomenal worlds”. Today this separation can be seen between the rational engineer and the sensible artist. Architecture, as both a technical and artistic aspiration, can become a means for the reconnection of the two paths.
The study of my site will follow this holistic approach. I plan to analyze both the sensual and instrumental through a series of maps, drawings, and writings. Issues of space and place, character, cosmos, connection, and spirit will be addressed in this site analysis.

34. ibid
The site is on Lake Mary Ronan, near Flathead Lake in Montana. In stark contrast to Flathead, Mary Ronan retains most of its shoreline and lacks the commercial nature. It is surrounded by natural landscape. Recently, the east shore was divided into plots of land: small, long and skinny. My family’s land is one of these, number 5. It has approximately 150 feet of shorefront and extends back away from the lake 500 ft. The site and the building upon it will become our connection to this earth, water, sky and spirit. We chose this site for several reasons. As one of many, it was the only site with signs of past inhabitants. A faint building foundation exists as a footprint of the past inhabitants. A maple tree and several lilacs surround this site. As non-native plants, they also reference the past inhabitation. The trees, mainly douglas fir, ponderosa pine and cottonwoods, on the lake open to reveal the shore. The far bank brings the earth, sky, and water together.

This place possesses a hidden meaning to me, perhaps once revealed through the built form that has since disappeared. Heidegger talks of a bridge that “gathers the earth as landscape”. Both sides of a bank exist along the river; they create space there. However that space does not become “place” until the bridge gives it presence. “It (the bridge) does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream.” The goal of built form should always be to create place, to gather the fourfold within the world and bring it back upon the earth.

39. ibid
This site is located on Lake Mary Ronan in northwest Montana. The lake lies approximately 20 miles west of Flathead lake. It is just outside the Flathead Indian Reservation. Nearby are the Mission mountains. The closest town (of sorts) is Dayton, with Polson being about a half an hour to the southeast.

The land we bought and the nearby surrounding area was transferred from the government to the Anaconda Copper Co. in 1913. It then passed through Somers Lumber Co., The Glacier Park Co., Burlington Northern Timberlands Inc., to Plum Creek Timber Co. Plum Creek owned the land from 1989 until it was bought by a private owner in 1999. Our family then purchased it in 2000.40

40. Documentation – Lake County Court House.
The following maps and drawings seek to understand aspects of the site and the feeling inherent within this site and the surrounding area. I made them to portray a sense of the site rather than hard facts (such as on the preceding map). Some are a combination of technological interpretation and a sensual, experiential feeling.
All places where mortals and immortals dwell are called *Vastsu.* Vastsu Vidya is the study of these places and the architecture that can be created there. The Vastsu is interpreted through a variety of issues including astrology, site texture, taste(?), appearance, and hue. It is assigned into a ‘category’ determined partly from the site’s declivity. Our site has a strong western slope and is part of the Shudra category according to this theory. The western directed site’s presiding element is air, represented by a grey crescent. Air governs the parts of the body between the heart and the head, and is watched over by *Ishvara.* It denotes movement, consciousness, and happiness. Some of the qualities associated with air include sound, tangibility, and lightness.

The Vatsu Purusha Mandala (as explained earlier) is a cosmic man that is put on the site and imparts certain attributes to that site. I have superimposed this cosmic man on our site to discover what qualities certain places have according to Vastsu Vidya. The head of the Mandala is pointed in the direction pre-determined by the site’s declivity (here that direction is west).

The Mandala ties in with the ideas my family has had about the site. The head, a place of reflection and contemplation, points out to the lake and will probably be a future location for a dock and sleeping deck. The remnants of the old building foundation lie near the heart of the cosmic man. This will be the general location of our house. The driveway (created in October, 2001) follows the legs and feet off the site.

---

2. ibid, 106-107, 133.
Existing site fabric
VEGETATION/WILDLIFE/
1. Ponderosa Pine (pinus ponderosa)
2. Douglas Fir (psudotsuga menziesii)
3. Western Larch (larix occidentalis)

The above trees comprise much of the overstory on the site. However, there are other trees such as the cottonwood, willow and one maple.
PROJECT STATEMENT

The house I hope to build here will exist out of the duality I believe allows for true dwelling. Its creations will be born of a close understanding and relationship with site and client. The punctum, defined by Roland Barthes as “that which pricks us“, will grow forth from an experiential and sensual tie to this place.43 The immeasurable should exist within this house. Relations between the building and its site, history, boundaries, activities, and people will allow for the existence of the immeasurable.

The house will be small, with a footprint of about 900 square feet. A garage, outhouse/storage area, sleeping deck, and a dock to the water will also be part of the program. Materials will stem from local availability, and a connection to my family. For example, my father, mother, sisters and I plan to do the actual building. Thus materials we know and relate to will be utilized. Much of the interior furniture will be a part of this process also. My mother and sister, with a background in pottery, will make the tiles, housewares, and bathroom sink. Art (painting/drawing) and woodworking are also important to our family. Pieces of these will help create the house.

The activities that connect our family will help to define the spaces we make. For example, a love of camping together will spawn many sleeping decks, indoor, screened-in, and outdoor. Skiing and snowboarding at the local hill (Big Mountain) ask for a hearth and warm space for convening afterward. Boating and fishing will begin from the removable dock. Ice fishing will not require the dock. Entertaining and conversing will also have ample input, probably resulting in a large (relatively) living room / kitchen and bar area.

House:
  hearth–living room (heart, entertaining, connecting)
  partial roof-top deck (outside reflection)
  wood-fired sauna (inner reflection)
  garage (transition)
  bedrooms (2-3) (sleeping)
  bath
  kitchen (entertaining, convening)
  mud-room (transition)
  second level sleeping loft
  porches (viewing, sleeping)
The following architects and artists, I believe, have addressed the issues of immeasurability and duality within their building. Many also have strong theories and writings about their beliefs. I chose the projects below, not as precedents for building a house, but for their ideas about humanity’s existence within the earth and world as expressed through architecture.
Chapel at Ronchamp
Le Corbusier addresses this issue of the immeasurable in his architecture and his writing. While I don’t always agree with how he actualizes his ideas, his approach has given me much help. He believed in collecting information, then allowing his mind to process it over time. This is where I believe the immeasurable begins to enter. Inherent in his process is a consideration for the fourfold. Le Corbusier had a literal interpretation of humanity’s connection to what he saw as cosmic truth and natural law.\(^44\) He created ways to describe space including La Modular, a system of measurement based off the human body. To connect to the sky and divinity he created roof gardens and walls that reached skyward. In his later architecture, Le Corbusier moved from such a rigid approach and began to create “ineffable space”.\(^45\)

Ronchamp Chapel
Ronchamp, France 1950-55
Le Corbusier

Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science*, spoke of buildings that “give expression to the sublimity of thoughtfulness and of stepping aside”.\(^46\) I believe Ronchamp is one of these buildings. Le Corbusier carefully considered the “four horizons”, the site, and the spiritual nature of the building.\(^47\) Ronchamp seems to be a place that successfully allows the inhabitants to relate to the immeasurable.

\(^45\) ibid
There is nothing about man that is really measurable. He is completely unmeasurable. He is the seat of the unmeasurable and he employs the measurable to make it possible for him to express something.

Louis Kahn
Between Silence and Light

Louis Kahn often used the word Silence to mean the immeasurable, and Light then meant the measurable – that which is. He believed that architecture existed between the two, silence and light. Kahn called this existence the Treasury of the Shadow. He believed that great buildings begin within silence; they are born out of the immeasurable. Measurable means are then employed to actualize the idea. If the building is successful, it will return to the original idea born from the immeasurable.48

Salk Institute for Biological Studies
La Jolla, California  1959-65
Louis Kahn

The Salk Institute was Kahn’s solution for an architecture that “responded to the whole human being”49. His ideas relate strongly to ancient Indian Vatsu Vidya. The building is derived from a mandala in which attributes of deities (divinity) are assigned to different areas of the place. This can be seen as a means to reunify humanity and divinity. A series of spaces link body, mind, society, and spirit - the attribute of a ‘whole human being’ for Kahn. In the Salk Institute, Kahn combines water, earth and sky together to ‘communicate to us things about ourselves we would otherwise not know’.50

49. ibid, 76.
50. ibid, 76.
Charles Correa was a student of L. Kahn. He views architecture as an ancient perception of the non-manifest world. It provides the backdrop for our relationship to something outside and beyond ourselves. Correa has also studied Indian Vedic Architecture. From this I believe he derived his “open to the sky” philosophy as a connection between man and the sky as the abode of the supernatural. In his essay, *Blessing of the Sky*, Correa talks of the guru under the tree and open sky as a symbol of education in Asia. Seen in contrast to the “little red school house” of North America, this Asian view gives an inherent connection to the earth and nature. 

*Small wonder that man has always perceived the sky above to be the abode of the gods and that down all these many millennia it has exerted such extraordinary power on us and the architecture we build.*

*Charles Correa*
This thesis focused on humanity’s place within the fourfold. Through a close connection to one’s surroundings, I believe we can begin to live a life that is both informed and meaningful. Over the last semester I learned that this connection is not one that can be physically created through architecture. We can however strive to create places that allow for one’s active participation within the fourfold. These spaces, I believe should help to reveal (or conceal) the earth, sky and divinity, while constantly referencing and encouraging human activity.

The house in this thesis seeks these qualities. I was introduced to the idea of the up-down-in-out during the semester - as it relates to Heidegger’s sky-earth-divinity-humanity concept. This helped me, as it references ideas that can inform architecture. Ideas of transformation, transition, solid / void, interior / exterior were also referenced.

The site, as mentioned in the site analysis, is directed east / west. I used this axis to align the building and be able to use the varying light conditions it allowed. When considering the project I added two directions to the typical cardinal four, that of the sky (up) and of the ground (down)
Site Study

This watercolor is a study of various site conditions. It references plants and animals I found there. Also it shows the tie to the past inhabitants and the Salish-Kootenai people native to that area. It was helpful in material considerations such as texture and color.
Ascension

I finished this painting after the site study. It draws off of ideas I had from the first watercolor. It explores the stair and sky-bridge aspects of the project. On the bottom are possible tiles that will be made and used in the floors and walls of our house.

The human element (the eye in the center) eventually created the curved sauna.
When I studied at the fourfold, I found things that were important to me and that were also inherent in within it. I used some of these ideas to begin to map out forces that would drive the architecture. While each is explained separately, I believe they are very interconnected. For example, the maple and lilac, while being left from past inhabitation are also part of the earth, and fed by rain and light from the sky. Some of these ideas are as follows.

The Earth: rock and water, plant and animal. Alive. The play of solid and liquid. Heidegger names it the ‘serving bearer’, it is the place where human activity takes place. I believe it is important for pieces of this earth to maintain their nature as a ‘thing’, or retain their inherent qualities. Thus, when a concrete wall is formed, the wood used will impart its image to the concrete, which, as a liquid takes the imprint of the solid that is forming it. This wood will then also be used in a wall nearby, so the two can reference each other.

The Sky: light and dark, sun, moon and stars. Shadow. Cycle. The sky in turn reveals and conceals the earth, thus architecture should orient itself with respect to the light and warmth conditions desired for human activity. The sauna, which is a dark, enclosed space, is on the north side of the house. The screen porch, and sky-bridge however are on the south. The sky is also that which hides the immeasurable. Thus architecture should create places for one to reference the sky.

Humanity: On the earth and under the sky. There are two aspects of humanity that are important to me within this design, activity and history. Through activity we live, create and re-create (recreate). Places in a house should encourage and also be encouraged by this. My family and I are build this house. Pottery, woodwork and painting will be included. For instance, tiles line the walk, and the bathroom sink will be made of pottery. Walls will be left blank for hanging paintings. Spaces will be made to encourage reading, thinking, entertaining and other activities our family finds important. History.- The site we have contains hints of past inhabitation. Very faintly one can see the remnants of a foundation. To the west of this are a lilac bush and a maple tree. These became important aspects of the design. A wall stops short of the lilac and its roof drain continues past to water the plant. On the south-west side, the maple becomes part of the porch. The sky-bridge extends out at the height of its canopy. In the evening, the tree provides shade, and frames a view to the lake.

Divinity: that which is felt and not seen. The sensation of connection and excitement that we get when immersed within our surroundings. Expressed though myth and stories. Thus I looked at some of the connections to native American myth, vedic myth and astronomy.
Many ideas helped influence my project. They all have in common an attempt to further humanity’s relationship to place through dwelling. More specifically, my families’ connection to our site and the house we plan to build. The following are things I considered in the design.

“You sense that for those who created this work of architecture, the sky above was heaven”

Albert Borgmann – “The destitution of Space”

Humanity’s dependence on the sky has almost fully vanished. With the inventions of our own light, calendar, clock and maps we have been able to dismiss the sky as a tool for understanding our existence. While these things are invaluable in modern life, I believe we need to also keep a relationship with the sky.

The course of the day, and the changing sky, are reflected in the site plan. In the morning shadows are cast forward toward the house and the lake. It is the beginning of the day. The garage and entry wall are in light. As the day progresses the sun light enters the house through the high south windows. The roof-top porch and outside shower are in sun to encourage playing in the water and reading or talking on the deck. In the evening, the lower deck is in light and shadows are cast backward. It is a time for reflection. As the sun sets across the lake, the deck and sky-bridge provide areas to enjoy the last sun, as well as view the stars.
The Lake Mary Ronan area was first inhabited by the Kootenai people. Originally the Ksunka people, the name was interpreted as Kootenai – meaning ‘water people’. I used the importance of water within my design. In many native American (and other culture’s) myths, water is seen as the giver of life. From the roofs of the house, all the rain is collected in a series of gutters. Each moves the water to a different location. From the entry garage water is spilled on the trellis to help vines grow up and link the east side to the earth. Overflow is dropped on a small rock pile marking the entry. Off the eastern roof on the house, water circle the sauna parapet and is carried across the front of the house to be spilled through a concrete wall marking the front door. Lastly, the water from the back of the roof flows onto a trellis and also out to drop above the existing lilac bush.
The architecture on our site attempts to weave itself in and out of the land. The beginning is a road that enters the east end of the site. It continues under overhead electrical wire through the site, between two large pine trees before turning to face the garage. I see this as a transition zone into this place. The garage rises from the trellis on the east wall to face an inner courtyard area. Its west wall is neither sold nor void. It allows partial view through, I believe this creates curiosity and a desire to step beyond the wall. This is the demobilization zone. The inner courtyard becomes of the architecture, (in contrast to the west side, where the house steps down to the land) it is contained by designed elements such as a planter, wall, and walkways. In the west, the architecture rise three more times, once as a steps down a small incline, once as a deck overlooking the lake and lastly as a dock that reaches into the lake. Thus the sequence repeats: earth-entry-earth-house-earth-stair-earth-deck-earth-dock-water.

Martin Heidegger, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, talks of a bridge that causes the banks of a creek to rise as a place. The banks continue until the bridge connects them. My hope is that through allowing the architecture to rise in small gestures toward the lake, it will connect the land and house as a place.
The materials in this project were selected for various reasons. Some of the important attributes were these:
- retain nature as a Heideggerian ‘thing’
- ability to bring about a cognizant connection with surrounding, earth, and sky.
- reflection of roof metal, growth of plants on the trellises
- play of light and shadow
- solid/void wood walls of the garage and south side deck.
- affects of environment through weathering metal at base of sauna, rain water washing down the concrete wall at entry.

I have chosen to emphasise four spaces within the project. These areas are not by any means meant to relate to the four elements of the fourfold individually, I believe that to do so would undermine the collective. They are areas I believe can place a person in the position to be, to live within both the measurable and the immeasurable.

These spaces are as follows:
- entry/garage
- hearth
- sauna
- sky-bridge/porch

The following two pages are plans, sections and perspective of the house. They emphasise the four areas above.
Presentation Boards

PROJECT/75
SAUNA
introverted
a place for inner reflection.
dark and of the earth.
organic
unreliant on external functions of wind, weather and light.

one moves along the east entry of the house to access the sauna.
a move from exterior to interior. light to dark (or dark to light) descending into the ground.

PORCH
extroverted.
a place for socializing and conversing.
southern exposure: function is reliant on weather, time, and season.

a piece reaches for the horizon. it links the water and the sky. at night it will appear to grow into the stars.
GARAGE
whose purpose is to
orient the transition from the
world in general to this
place.
vehicular disembarkment
reconnection to
the land.
a slower pace
in.

HEARTH
connection to others, to the sky.
a vertical link of human knowledge (books) to the
immeasurable (concealed by the sky),
revealing as it conceals
embodies the ancient ritual surrounding fire, the center, heart
myth
up.
Top right: western elevation with the skybridge and porch

Bottom right: view from the southwest, showing roof drain to lilac on left side of image

Top left: section model, showing the break in roof lines to create a connection to the sky

Bottom left: view from the northwest, showing the trellis and in the background, the sauna.
In the beginning of this project I stated that ‘building and dwelling are part of the same’. I believe this is true. It is however difficult to ‘dwell’ in the chaos of symboligy and the mediocrity of typical suburbia. I have not come to an answer that can remedy this. The house my family will begin to build this summer embodies the ideas I believe will allow for reconnection within the fourfold. It is my hope that it will help me in a search for true dwelling.