

Consider Two words/concepts

Profession – “a calling” the act of openly claiming a belief or opinion.

Practice – practicing and expression of a calling. To apply.

The belief that I hold is that there exists a reciprocal relationship between nature and culture. And I put this belief to practice in a number of ways.

One profession with multiple practices:

1. I am designer of small scale buildings, primarily homes.
2. I write, publish and lecture on topics that help me express my beliefs
3. I make art in a variety of mediums.

Jewelry: I explore more or less refined materials, maybe a way to think about them is that they express the relationship between wildness and civility.

I take photographs. That blurr the perception

“Between Earth and Ether” (ether is the element believed to fill the upper regions of space: heaven). to express the tangible and intangible, or the influence of the intangible on the tangible.

Finally, after several years on non-action, I am returning to the art of monoprint. you cannot completely control the medium. But the better you know the materials, the more accurately you can anticipate the outcome. The subject is Ether.

This brings me back to thinking about architecture. Because I think one aspect of successful architecture is the design that anticipates experience and use. And this condition of anticipation requires faith and commitment to that which is simultaneously tangible and intangible. And that which is real and sensed and felt , and finally a mastery in the materials used to create a building to most accurately manifest a hoped-for experience for others.

it is the work that evolved from my PHD that I would like to focus on tonight.

The ideas that I will present and discuss may be familiar to some of you, but I do not think that anyone really knows the full story of how these ideas relate to activities, how my professional interest in the relationship between nature and culture becomes a particular practice of teaching.

The Artemis Institute the non profit I founded developed out of the growing frustration I experienced when driving through the West over 15 years ago.

## THE REASON

*What do I mean by this?*

In experiencing these places I could not come to terms with the great discrepancy of the qualities between these natural places and what we were building.

What was the exchange? It seemed to me to be a great loss of **beauty** – for expansive ugliness. Ugliness for which we are responsible.

What was more saddening than the discrepancy between the built and the natural, was that I knew that we are capable of making great beauty. But that such efforts were not at the forefront of our concerns. Perhaps we do not know what beauty is today– at least as could be known through the things we make.

**1. I began to ask myself** how do we recognize and create beauty? Could it be made? Does it exist without us? Was it a quality that was present in both nature and our artifacts? Was it relative or universal? Was it an external quality, or an ability within us? We are not taught about beauty while in school – even as creators of the built world. Yet, it seems to me that such a quality would be desirable.

It also seems that people across the globe have no difficulty recognizing what is called “**beautiful**” in the natural world. From sunsets to grasslands, snowy mountaintops to redbirds, we generally recognize the beauty of the natural world.

We also seem to recognize human-made **damaged “natural” landscapes** (whether we admit our recognition or not). Oceans with dead coral reefs, poisoned waters and landslides from cutting into hillsides. Clear-cuts and mining tailings.

**So why is it that we seem to be caught within a world of relativity when it comes to recognizing or desiring to achieve such qualities in our own creations today?**

**Is this because we no longer create things to honor the gods? That we no longer find ways to locate our selves in the COSMOS? That we believe there are limits to the universe we can know and come to terms with? Is it because we are focused on ourselves and the OBJECT of the expression of ourselves,**

**Rather than the more difficult – and more universal- timeless expression – of being, honor, temporality and our inevitable mortality?**

Is it our rationalized and pragmatic belief system that relies on testing, objective truth and definitive knowledge that requires some determined reality we can all count up and agree upon to **know**, rather than “feel?”

With these questions I contemplated the NATURE of nature and wildness, and our consideration of it. How do we respond to these considerations?

## **THE THEORY**

**2. From these questions I recognized the obvious** : there is a connection – a relationship – between nature and culture. Not just in the fact that the things we make are made from the world, or that our sustenance is gained from the rest of the world.

But that how we come to understand ourselves – as individuals – and as a society is greatly influenced by the natural world around us - and our attentiveness to this relationship.

**3. A simple explanation** of the relationship between nature and culture is that : Culture emerges as a society develops a language of communication in response to the place in which they live, how they live, and what is required to live within its environment.

**So what place are we living in when we discuss the relationship between nature and culture in abstract notions – in numbers and data sets. In analysis and abstractions, In summaries and graphs. In a language that recognizes the served and the server.**

**We discuss the evidence of nature through rationalizing and objective terms such as topography, ecology and geology. They are terms of power and control.**

**This abstract and objective way of knowing and discussing have translated the holistic qualities and characteristics of the world and the natural places we experience into parts and pieces to be studied and discussed in the abstract.**

**From this way of thinking we have eroded a more inclusive and sympathetic way of knowing the relationship between nature and culture.**

**We sense and believe that we exist separate from the natural world.**

**4. From these thoughts, that were further developed during the writing of my dissertation,** I came to believe that the loss of beauty in our creations, the loss of our consideration of beauty was not only allowing us to indiscriminately destroy the beauty inherent in the world, it also made permissible our own activities that denied the necessity and value of beauty in the things we make - that surround us everyday.

To clarify - by beauty I do not mean the simple application of aesthetics: proportions, color or rhythm – but a deeper quality that embodies and expresses a particular type of relationship between nature and society, between the experience of nature and the an expression of an individual's experience)

Beauty, just as love, peace and wisdom, simply needs to be at the forefront of our considerations and cultural expression instead of commerce and economics.

The issue for me became how to find a way to transform our over-reliance on rational knowledge and abstraction when we are not only thinking about the world, but making things.

**5. The Artemis Institute was founded to** provide a home to an alternative model of architectural education that **places the engagement in poetic knowledge before the rational.**

The ancient greeks recognized more that one way that we came to knowledge, among these were rhetorical knowledge, rational knowledge, and poetic knowledge.

Poetic knowledge is that type of knowledge that occurs from the engagement with the world around us. It is a holistic knowledge that is born out of our senses, and is pre-rational.

Poetic Knowledge is that knowledge that provides the “spark” of intuition to the creative idea or concept. It is the knowledge that is based in more universal truths that are made specific as we come to terms with describing a notion, thought or a human construct.

Poetic knowledge is gained when we are dwelling in a place, not simply living in it.

Poetic knowledge inspires transformative understanding of ourselves in the world. In the western world it is the creative spark of belonging

**6.Poetic Knowledge is critical to our creative process.** It is a knowledge that remains tied to the world rather than disengaged and self-referential as is so much of the made world today.

Along with the idea of Poetic Knowledge I have come to recognize four conditions that engage us in the relationship between nature and culture, and in coming to a deeper sense of knowing ourselves in the world.

7. These concepts guide and infuse my teaching. They are specific to thinking about architecture but extend into our daily lives.

Poetic Cosmos

Dwelling in Place

Deep Ecological Well Being

Ritual and Myth

## **THE PROGRAM**

**These concerns led to the formation of the pedagogical model for Remote Studio,**

In order to underscore the need to live more integrated lives, from work to leisure, that consider stewardship, responsibility and reciprocity of our actions – and to counter the reliance on a way of thinking that separates and abstracts knowledge into discriminate parts and pieces,

8. The Remote Studio program is taught as a continuous FIRST-HAND experience –

It is a live/learn environment, a full semester course load taught off-campus in the remote valley north of Yellowstone national park.

**9.First hand experience of the world** – to encourage intimate experiences with the magic nature, its power to inspire...

Integrated learning provides a fully woven life experience. It can teach that we can no longer live respectfully in one place and disregard another. We cannot consider designing “sustainable” architecture, while living unsustainable lives.

**10. Drawing from the power of first-hand experiences** to inspire poetic knowledge and creative intuition.

This “first” step is critical to help people recognize the difference between creating “of” a place and creating “about” a place.

**11. Vessels** – an individual's contemplation of the understanding of themselves in relation to their experiences in the natural engage their intuition and Poetic Knowledge.

Considering and making with materials that are found in “context” rather than abstracted through economics and market suggests a different way to consider materials - as part of the world, rather than easily consumed and commodified materials of use.

Transferring intuition – of an idea – the creative spark – into an artifact requires engagement with our rational abilities. In other words, choices must be made regarding appropriateness and accuracy of expression. A reciprocity between idea and expression gained through knowing a material and its nature (ways to transform its nature, value of the transformation through expression.)

Vessels are a component of integrative learning, requiring students to engage themselves in contemplation of idea, process and expression in relationship to themselves and the world around them. Vessels embody an engagement with personal history, particular places and cultural languages of communication / expression.

Vessel projects are complimented by **readings in environmental philosophy and nature writings to encourage the consideration of world view.**

For the most part, we mature into adults with little consideration of how we come to believe as we do. We simply believe. Without critical consideration of our world view, we have difficulty coming to terms with our creative abilities – understanding what informs them. During the reading and discussion sequence students engage in critical thinking in order to come to terms with what they read and offer ways to interpret the reading in view of their own thoughts, or interpret their own thoughts (or modify their beliefs) from something they read. These discussions can become quite personal – and transformative.

**12. Understanding each other's world view** and creative process (modes of work, reflection and making) can diminish the ego, promote confidence and allow for opening up to external ideas and concerns. Such a position also allows for more successful working relationships in a group. The value of understanding place together creates / results in community and shared expressions.

**12A. The foundation of the experience of making, reading and discussions are the back country experiences.** With the exception of an explanation of the value of mindful or mindless consideration and experiences as a goal of these trips – rather than back country camping extravaganzas -These experiences are allowed to be “first hand experiences” rather than “guided” experiences. They are long hikes and camping trips because mindful, meditative experiences of these wild places requires a certain “distancing” from our experiences of abstraction and commodification.

Going “deep” into the wild places of the world allows for subtle transformations and personally experienced epiphanies . These are the unfettered experiences of AWE we do not experience from our own creations. **They are the moments of understanding the power and value of the world that we are responsible to – in our every day actions.**

### **13. The GROUP Projects**

Operate on two levels.

For the **students** they provide the opportunity to work on a VESSEL together – to challenge one another in the expression of a creative idea.

To learn how to measure ideas in relation to materials.

To consider how to act responsibly to the world around them, to provide an artifact of need to the community and the wild lands they have spent their semester in.

For the **community**, they gain an place for civic engagement ( an expression of the community) at the interface between the wild and civilized that can assist their recognition of the connection (rather than the separation) between culture and nature, built and natural, civilized and wild, aid in their understanding of contemporary expressions of relating to the natural world, that are reflected not only in formal expression, but disposition to the nature of the place and the application and integration of materials and construction strategies that are directly or indirectly less destructive of the natural world.

## **THE PROJECTS**

Explain in terms of

Poetic Cosmos

Dwelling in Place

Deep Ecological Well being

Ritual and Myth

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B-Bar Ranch

Remote Studio Design Studio

Bohart Shelter – Bohart Ranch – k-12 Outdoor science education

North Star Ranch – Horse Shelter

Deer Haven

Santa Fe Pre-Fab Pavilion

Pine Creek Pavilion – National Forest Service

City of Livingston Trail Side Reflection Point

**14. FINALLY** – what I hope the experiences of the Remote Studio provide to the students in that confidence and knowledge gained from first hand experiences that are not easily erased from memory. That these experience result in a knowledge base that will eventually grow into a personal wisdom. That type of experience that may be challenged but not disregarded.

That they remain committed to a knowledge and understanding of the world that engages responsibility – and that the search for beauty becomes a life-long passion.

