Teaching Intuition:
Ways of Knowing for Beginning Design Students

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If architectural exercises are organized using Multiple
Intelligence's as a framework for the active discovery feature of an aesthetic experience, then we can begin to affect the intuitive aspect of beginning design students learning in a noticeably positive way.

SITUATION

Intuition is something we have heard about in many different forms in the course of our education. It is something we know to be important but we are not quite sure what it is, how to improve our abilities with it, or access it at will. It is frequently said to be something innate, a part of our intrinsic nature.

This understanding is frequently conveyed through the implicit messages architects or designers make about design. Louis Kahn refers to intuition as the greatest gift we have in the making of architecture.' Robert Venturi describes is as the "artist monitoring his reactions" in reference to the designers difficulty in watching or controlling their intuition^.^ At times it is referred to
as a "sense" of order about the way in which things go t~gether.~ Or it may be said of design to be "a gut reaction" or the ability to "sense" when something is right, or see the problem q~ickly.~ Frank Lloyd Wright refers to "the eye that sees ..., the heart that feels ..., and the courage that follows ...".5 From the philosophical perspective of George Santayana, beauty is referred to as a value, "that is, it is not a perception of a matter of fact or of a relation: it is an emotion, an affectation of our volitional and appreciative nat~re".~ Allof these definitions have an illusive thread and yet represent true expressions of the intuitive but are not always very helpful to a beginning design student. The ambiguous nature of the intuitive lends itself to a less than direct form of communication and understanding which may be rooted in both the personal experiences of the intuitive, and definitions associated with intuition.

Experiences of the intuitive are actually quite complex and are not easily put into words by those who have them.'

1. John Lobell, Between Silence and Light (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 1979), p. 12. 2. Bryan Lawson, Design in Mind (Oxford, England: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1994), p. 94. 3. Pierre von Meiss, Elements ofArchitecture: From
Form to Place (London, England: Chapman and Hall, 1991),
p. 31. 4. Eric Connell, The Design Practices of Architects in Relation to the Models of Design; Analysis-Synthesis and Conjecture-Analysis (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Ph.D., 1996), p. 64.5. John Peters, The Oral History of Modem Architecture (New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), taken from the audio recording that accompanies the book. 6. George Santayana, The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outline ofAesthetic Theory (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1955), p. 31.7. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1990), p. 53.

the 14th National Conference on the Beginning Design Student