Introduction

One of the perennial problems in aesthetics is the justification of normative judgments. How can we support the claim that a painting in a new and unfamiliar style is beautiful rather than bizarre, an action noble rather than base, or a public building that does not honor the classical convention of monumentality or the modern one of individuality nonetheless a great work?

To assess the value of objects or situations that are qualitative and unique seems for many a thoroughly nonrational process. Must such assessments, whether of moral worth or guilt or of aesthetic value rely on an intuitive sense of what is good, right, or beautiful? Must they rest on feeling, which may be the same thing? Principles are necessarily general and cannot respond to the peculiarities of individual circumstances and, when they are imposed on unique conditions, often offend by their hard-hearted indifference to consequences or their expedient disregard of the full range of their effects. And in cases of aesthetic judgment, ideology, whether political, social, or artistic, can do violence to both creativity and originality.

What alternative is left? If we mistrust feeling and intuition as inveterately personal and thus not transferable to others, and principles as impossibly abstract and thus impervious to unique particularities, only a toss-up seems to be left. End of question. End of question? Not so, for architectural competitions proliferate and decisions have to be made, if not by aesthetic criteria then by political or economic ones, and if not by choice, then by default. If reflect we must, some resolution of this quandary is necessary. How then to proceed?
Architecture is as representative as any other art of the difficulties in making judgments of aesthetic value. At the same time it differs in significant ways from those arts, for the union of function and beauty in architecture puts the lie to any theory that makes disinterestedness a condition of aesthetic value. It may be, however, because of that fusion of the practical and the aesthetic that the cognitive support of aesthetic judgment can be drawn more readily and clearly here than for other arts, for moral judgment, or for normative judgment in general. And it may even be that the direction we shall take on architectural judgment can prove useful in those other recalcitrant domains of normative thought. At the very least, aesthetic judgment may seem less threatening, at least at first.

**Judgments of aesthetic value: the critic**

Efforts at making credible judgments of aesthetic value in architecture, as in the other arts, seem to center on one of two opposite poles: the person engaged in appreciative experience or the architectural object. Either the basis for the value of a building rests on the ability of an individual to respond affectively or cognitively to its charms, or it rests on features of the structure, features that conform to standards for which universal validity is claimed, such as unity in variety or the object’s presumed “aesthetic” qualities.

Both alternatives are unsatisfactory: The critic’s judgment can easily seem preremptory, no more than a decree based upon personal and arbitrary preference, while the aesthetic characteristics of the building are ultimately conventional or circular (e.g., aesthetic qualities are what make an object aesthetic). And if one chooses to adopt a scientific approach and quantify those traits, the grounds for judgment are frequently the questionable accumulation of preferences by unskilled observers of those objects.

How, then, to proceed after so complete a dismissal of the alternatives? Let me begin by looking at some aspects of these contrary approaches, aspects whose
helpfulness may persist beyond their original limitations. First let us consider the person making the judgment, in this case, the architectural critic.

Although two and a half centuries have passed since it was first published in 1757, Hume’s “Of the Standard of Taste” remains the preeminent philosophical discussion of critical aesthetic judgment. While it hasn’t settled the question, Hume’s clear description of the traits of an ideal critic is a thorough and compelling account of the qualifications that may be expected in an expert judge of artistic merit. This essay is too well known for me to do more than cite the qualifications to be expected of an expert critic, nor do I want to contribute to the continuing debate over them. Hume’s account rather serves the useful purpose here of helping to focus the discussion, and a brief review of his characterization of the expert critic, then, will launch our inquiry.

Central to Hume’s position is the claim that judgments of aesthetic value are the considered pronouncements of a properly qualified critic. Since there is presumably no objective scientific formula for arriving at these judgments, adequately grounded criticism seems the only ground. So for Hume, a “true judge in the finer arts” possesses healthy and well-developed organs of sense, a sensitive imagination, which Hume describes as delicacy of feeling, full experience of the arts in question and knowledge of their principles and practices, a wide acquaintance with other arts that enables one to make revealing comparisons, and a mind free from prejudices, both personal and theoretical, that obstruct the unhampered exercise of experience and judgment. Finally Hume adds to all this the good sense to be able to keep in mind all these factors and qualifications and arrive at a fair and balanced assessment.

To Hume’s list we can add Dewey’s suggestion that we include familiarity with different cultural traditions in art. At the present stage in world history this may seem an obvious requirement, but for Dewey, writing three quarters of a century ago, it is a sign of the breadth of his conception and awareness. Further, along with stressing the perceptual
qualifications of the expert critic, Dewey adds a synthesizing function to the critic’s analytic one. It is an easy matter to apply this portrait of the ideal critic to the more focused purview of the architectural critic.

This is a rich and full list of capabilities that characterize an expert judge of aesthetic value. It lacks, however, a critical dimension, one so basic that its omission leaves the critic suspended in mid-air, as it were, ripe with inapplicable competences. For underlying perceptual sensitivity, a lively imagination, wide experience with aesthetic matters that extends beyond one’s native culture, and the educational background to focus and direct that experience – underlying these essential qualifications and partly the cause of them, is one more fundamental still.

The last century, especially the last half-century, has shown how deeply and pervasively our cognitive preconceptions direct and color our experience and understanding. Sources for this recognition include the Marxist critique of ideology, insights from the sociology of knowledge and linguistic anthropology, and now, most recently, hermeneutics and its influence on interpretation, culminating in the unresolvable pluralism of postmodernism. We cannot evade the recognition that, despite the intent and efforts of phenomenology, there is no pure experience. And in our present context, we must acknowledge that there is no pure aesthetic experience. We look at the world, to speak metaphorically, through a multitude of superimposed filters, the filters of language and, still more comprehensively, the ontology and metaphysics of a culture. How else explain, for example, the pervasive and persistent dualism of Western civilization, a dualism not shared by most Eastern traditions? How explain the insistent transcendentalism of the classical tradition in Western philosophy, a vision that contrasts sharply with the animism prevalent in pre-literate societies? The fact that we cannot escape such influences and that, in order to view the world we must see through lenses and
filters, does not vitiate entirely what we see. It rather defines and orders it and should make us more wary.

Such ruminations bear on all inquiry but they are especially pertinent to the judgments we make, particularly judgments of value, of aesthetic value. For here we may attempt and even presume to determine normative status on independent, objective grounds. That fact that this is impossible and that interpretive filters are unavoidable does not, however, relegate our judgments to the undeniable realms of subjectivity or mere chance. Hume’s critic is not dumb nor is ours speechless. What we need, in fact, is to become more explicit, to identify and expose the filters that “correct” our vision and to be more aware and deliberate in choosing those to use. For here lies the main grounds for debate, since what is under our control is perhaps not so much what we see but the lenses through which we see it.

In the case of architectural judgment, the choice of standpoint is basic. There are, I believe, two opposite poles with numerous intermediate positions. These defining opposites are not only theoretical alternatives but are also the most commonly held and practiced. For convenience they may be called the observational standpoint or the spectator view and, second, aesthetic engagement or the participatory approach. The observational standpoint comes from a long tradition in Western culture that understands humans’ relation to nature as one of separation and opposition. Here nature serves human needs and people impose their wills on it. Thus humans are distinct and different, standing apart from nature and projecting their views, values, and desires onto the natural world. This long-established cognitive tradition of separation and distance culminated in Descartes’ mind-body dualism and emerged in modern aesthetic theory in Kant’s notion of disinterested contemplation. Disinterestedness is strikingly exemplified by the Claude glass, a small instrument for viewing scenery popular in England in the eighteenth century. It reflects a miniature image of the landscape on the convex surface of a small viewer of black or colored glass, not only distancing but also framing the landscape.
The aesthetic alternative to aesthetic disinterestedness is the concept of aesthetic engagement. Here, in a full aesthetic experience, there is no separation and contemplative disengagement between viewer and object. Both merge perceptually, the appreciator becoming entirely absorbed by the object in a rich and complex unity of experience, and the object assimilated into the appreciative experience. There is no tonal unfolding of musical sound, feeling fully connected in body and consciousness by entering a building or moving through an architectural complex. Aesthetic engagement is a perceptual state that is intensely active, with cognitive, affective, and somatic dimensions. It is also thoroughly cultural, as is its alternative, disinterestedness. That is why it is essential for architectural judgment to take into account the theoretical equipment the critic brings to the process.6

Judgments of aesthetic value: the building

Let us now turn from the critic to the opposite pole of the presumed normative equation: the architectural structure. The synthesizing function to which Dewey refers is the request that the critic search for some unifying feature in the work under consideration. By revealing an integral whole, the critic provides a guide for the appreciator. Such a theme, however, must actually be present in the work and not an ingenious contrivance of the critic, and it must be found in the work consistently.7 This requirement to function as a unifying principle clearly follows from the central theme of Dewey’s own aesthetic theory in the idea of aesthetic experience as a unified whole, an experience that moves through its course to fulfillment.8

Dewey’s theory is especially useful in relation to architectural criticism because of this very focus on the unity of experience. What Dewey brings us to see is that, in speaking of any art, we are actually speaking of our experience of that art. So when we look for aesthetic unity, it is the unity of experience and not the formal unity of the building or whatever other art object with which we must be concerned. The focus of the theory, then, must be on
the architectural experience and not the structure and, similarly, the grounds for considering a building beautiful rest ultimately on the complex interplay of the building with its user, visitor, or inhabitant.

To his account of the function of critical judgment, discrimination and unification, Dewey adds a caveat in the form of two fallacies. The first is a reductive fallacy. From sensing a qualitative aspect of a building, such as its marble facing or the style it emulates, the fallacy consists in taking one of these or any other single constituent of the work and then reducing consideration of the entire complex whole to that isolated element. Other factors often taken in isolation are the current architectural fashion and the fashionableness of a particular architect. This fallacious practice also includes historical criticism and sociological criticism that biases judgment or embodies a political or aesthetic ideology. Each of these factors may be relevant but none offers a sufficient account in itself of the complexity of considerations that join in justifying a judgment of architectural excellence.9

The second fallacy Dewey identified is one that is often mixed with the reductive. It consists in the confusion of categories, such as taking an historical judgment for an aesthetic judgment or a mathematical analysis for an aesthetic analysis. This occurs when judgment is based on the fact that a building represents a specific historical style or is simply old, or on the discovery in an analysis of the structure of the presence of the golden section. This fallacy has a practical counterpart in the common confusion of values, such as mistaking historic, scientific or religious values in a work for its aesthetic value. Such confusions result from neglecting the intrinsic significance of the medium, which must always be central, for ultimately “the function of criticism is the re-education of perception of works of art.”10

Dewey’s approach to aesthetic evaluation thus takes a focus somewhat different from Hume’s. While its purpose resembles Hume’s in foregoing any objective, quantitative standards by which the aesthetic merit of an building can be measured, it differs in
turning to a discriminatory examination of the building’s capacity to produce an aesthetic experience. It searches for what there is in the structure that engages one to *experience* it directly and immediately as a shaped and unified succession that brings a sense of fulfillment in coming to completion. This approach does not center on the appreciator or critic nor does it concentrate on the features of the building. Rather it focuses on the experience that is generated by the coming together of both, that is, on a direct experiential process. Thus we must attend to both the appreciator and the object of appreciation together.

Now is landscape most fully appreciated as disinterested or engaged? A full discussion of this question demands a more extended treatment than the scope of this essay allows. It is a question that has been considered elsewhere. Suffice it to make two observations here. One is that the choice of a theoretical standpoint for appraising the aesthetic value of landscape has a profound influence on the judgment that is rendered. At the same time, if the perceptual experience is taken as central, it may have a powerful effect on judgment, perhaps outweighing the influence of theoretical preconceptions. The second comment is to urge the primacy of perception, in Merleau-Ponty’s phrase. In any matter being contested in aesthetics, there is no more compelling recourse in searching for a resolution.

**Architectural features and architectural experience**

Before returning to the portrait of the qualified critic and the critic’s judgment, let me give this direction more specificity by turning to the occasion of appreciation and inquiring into the architectural factors that contribute to an aesthetically fulfilling experience. We should note here, following Dewey, that such experience is not a private moment of pleasure but a situation that develops as an integral process toward its fulfillment. The possibility should hold that any person with normal perceptual and cognitive capacities, joined with aesthetic interest and sensitivity could, in principle, come to a similar judgment of aesthetic value, despite differences of depth, intensity, breadth, and background.
What, to begin, are the general characteristics of a building that contribute to an experience of architectural beauty? Here we can do no better than start with Vitruvius, to whom the key elements of architecture were firmitas, utilitas, and venustas, i.e., structural stability, utility or suitable spatial arrangement, and beauty or attractive physical appearance (note its etymological origins in Venus). Certainly, each building has its own unique particularity and complexity, and no general guide can assume the status of an autocratic rule. Such general requirements as these, then, can only serve as a guide. When our discussion turns to specific features of a building, we may need to qualify these general characteristics in the light of the interplay between building and user. For the central question concerns how these characteristics of buildings relate to our experience of them. Conversely but similarly, Beardsley’s three criteria for aesthetic experience -- complexity (diversity of distinct elements), intensity (concentration of experience), and unity (coherence and completeness) -- refer at the same time to features of aesthetic objects.

Pursuing the general conditions of an aesthetically successful building, we can begin by observing that good architecture possesses some degree of variety and its concomitant contrast. A building that is dully uniform does not invite perceptual involvement and is not satisfying. Indeed, it runs the risk of being boring and even oppressive, thus failing to assert any positive aesthetic value. Another condition that contributes to a positive aesthetic judgment of a building comes from the materials it utilizes. All materials exhibit a sensuous surface, and different materials and their qualities affect the appearance of the building’s surfaces. This is much of what we directly perceive visually, and such things as color and texture exercise a strong influence on the character of our experience. We react differently to the faded, soiled, or tawdry from the warmth of certain tones and the feeling of solidity some surfaces convey.
Certainly space and its correlative, mass, are fundamental physical and perceptual concomitants of every architectural structure. Buildings stand in space and in relation to that space, and they embrace space within their walls. They construct, as it were, a dialectic of space and mass, structuring them physically and at the same time perceptually. To balance these abstract qualities is the powerful presence of sensory experience. Sensuous delight is a compelling dimension of a building that possesses strong positive value. Sensuous satisfactions include color, fragrance, texture, smell, and sound, but also somatic perception, as in the kinesthetic as well as the visual perception of a building’s spaces in its entry area, hallways, rooms, and stairways as we move into and through them, as well as in the space over our heads, ceiling height being a crucial influence on the perception of somatic space. The range of sensuous perception of architecture is enormous. For example, in addition to surface and spatial qualities it includes auditory sensation, which itself influences spatial and somatic awareness. Buildings have sounds; they speak, as it were, in different resonances and with different degrees of intimacy or distance.

Such qualities as space, mass, and sensuousness do not stand alone but are activated by the presence of the human participant, the user. In making use of an architectural structure, the user must move through the building, setting its conditions, its facilities, its spaces in motion. Thus movement is a critical component of architecture. The experience of movement activates a building and in so doing enables it to fulfill its function. Every building has a function and this informs its design, a fact that moves architecture from a structural art into a social one.

In this connection let me add to this account an additional influence on architectural value, perhaps more subtle and difficult to assess but nonetheless important. That is the appropriateness of scale: the size of a building and its features in relation to the human body. Here cultural and regional influences, as well as personal familiarity and preference, play
a large part. How, for example, does the size of a building affect the experience of beauty? The juxtaposition of the human mass in relation to a cottage, a mansion, a public building, a skyscraper, or an urban district is a critical determinant of whether the architectural experience is intimidating, awe-inspiring, or embracing and comfortable. Some buildings provide a sense of intimacy and security, while others may evoke a feeling of expansiveness and loftiness.

Finally, the aesthetic importance of a building may also be qualified by its degree of social accessibility. In a democratic age when everyone can claim the right to a fulfilling life although relatively few actually achieve it, accessibility to the satisfaction that good architectural design can offer, both in public places and in domestic ones, affects the overall consideration of its social value. Factors such as entrance fees, locked gates, and guards limit the extent to which people can enjoy the beauties of a building. The situation resembles that of paintings in private collections and the challenge that great art is a human treasure to which everyone has a right.

A final condition concerns the place of aesthetic value in relation to other values. Most sites and buildings embody a complex mix of values. It is important to recognize that aesthetic value is always present in any building, although its position is sometimes submerged by the aggressive advocacy of other values, especially economic but also political, moral, and cultural ones and, certainly, use values. It is always necessary to ask, What is the relative importance of aesthetic value in the situation and, if not dominant, to recognize that its presence is nevertheless necessary and therefore needs to be preserved? Beauty and functionality nearly always engage in dialectical conflict and both of these interact with economic values, so that their felicitous integration is especially striking and rewarding. Architecture embodies the multiplicity of values in especially forceful ways, and their emphatic interplay in architecture is a dramatic instance of their presence in every art. When values are successfully
integrated in architecture and design, the results are often so vivid and tangible that the design arts can stand as representing that desirable goal for other arts and aesthetic situations.

Let me turn now to some *specific characteristics* that typically enhance the aesthetic appreciation of building. This list is hardly exhaustive but is intended to suggest common characteristics or features that can evoke the positive appreciation of a building. As with the account of general traits, this discussion is not intended to imply a rule or a formula for architectural beauty. It rather suggests features the designer or preservationist may wish to consider introducing, retaining when already present, or enhancing, guided always by expert judgment on their quantity, size, and distribution. As before, the order of this discussion does not reflect relative importance; this, too, requires informed judgment in each particular case. Moreover, in a sense every aesthetic feature is both general and particular: general by being a factor common to all or much architecture, particular because every instance of it is uniquely embodied.

How effective and valuable these experiences are depends, of course, on the entire situation, including the contribution of those experiencing them. Their participation, their *engagement*, takes many and complex forms, from the factors that Hume and Dewey identified to the idiosyncratic traits of individual persons. Moreover, engaging aesthetically with a building means abandoning the visual aesthetic that reduces a building to its façade; it requires instead that we move into and through it. In fact, the ability to choose the direction and rate of *movement* may add to a building’s attraction. Finally, some degree of *coherence* in the building, both perceptually and processually, adds to its satisfaction. The confused perception of a building’s interior spaces creates a sense of discomfort and inhospitality.

There are three additional factors in architectural experience to which we have already referred that do not inhere in the structure itself but play a critical role in determining its success: site, function, and communal significance. No building stands alone
but is bound to \textit{the site} on which it rests. How it embodies or relates to that site and how it harmonizes with it is crucial in our experience. An architectural experience of a building, from a temple to a home, that seems to be part of its site, emerging from the ground, as if it had grown there, can be immensely fulfilling. This enlarges the architectural object enormously. Our focus cannot be on the structure alone but always on the complex of building and site.\cite{15}

Another critical factor in architectural aesthetics is \textit{function}. Buildings have jobs to do: They exist for some purpose, are built to fulfill a task and meet an active need. Finally, buildings are social constructions. A good building not only embodies a harmony of its structure with its site. It also harmonizes its structure with its function and \textit{embodies the character of the community}.

Certain of these general characteristics and specific features that may contribute to the beauty of a building are inviolable conditions. As generalizations from experience, they may be modified and, more likely, added to as we conduct appropriate research and reflect increasingly on the loss or failure of environmental beauty. Most important is it to recognize that none of this constitutes a formula but rather suggests factors to consider in designing or refining a structure. The same requirements of sensibility and taste that enter into creation in any art occupy a similar place here: The experience of architectural beauty is no different in kind from the experience of beauty in any art.

It is interesting to realize that in describing the elements and features of architectural structures, we find ourselves at the same time speaking of the experience of architecture. Clearly, we cannot treat those features satisfactorily apart from considering how they function in architectural experience. Architecture, again, demonstrates more insistently than other arts, not only the interdependence of structure and perception but their actual fusion.
Quantitative and qualitative judgments

Architecture thus has characteristic factors that contribute to its aesthetic value. In this respect it is no different from any other art. Indeed, it is an art, ultimately an art of environment. Like any art object, the physical building is fulfilled in engaged experience when its features are activated by an appreciative participant. And again as in art, the assessment of a structure’s aesthetic value is best made by persons knowledgeable of and sensitive to the kind of factors that help create environmental beauty. In every building, as in every art object, these factors work in a unique combination, and it requires informed and discriminating consideration to assess its success. That there is the same coalescence of judgment in building as in the other arts is shown by the emergence of a canon. Furthermore, we do not have to speak only of buildings that evoke near universal admiration, of the Taj Mahal or Katsura Palace, to exemplify architectural beauty. Innumerable smaller structures, including vernacular ones, possess qualities that encourage us to engage with them and produce experiences that transcend the mundane and routine and expand the human spirit.

The focal point in building assessment on the contrast between qualitative and quantitative judgments seems to place the issues of assessment in stark perspective. We have found in the present discussion that architectural judgment is neither inexpressibly personal nor can it be objectively assessed by quantitative measures. We must be content with the degree of precision that the subject allows, as Aristotle observed about ethical judgment, and this requires the same capacity to discriminate in each particular case to make a reasonable and justifiable judgment, using characteristics and features of the sort we have shown here. This does not end the discussion, however, for insofar as building design evolves, so must our awareness and recognition of different aesthetic features. And as the art critic’s skills must develop and expand, so must those of the architectural critic. But a good critic, whether of art or of building, always subordinates judgment to experience. Finally, the scholar-
researcher, assisting this process, has the opportunity to identify general characteristics and particular features previously unremarked and so help in developing a normative theory of building. Moreover, the establishment of critical judgment is not the work of a single critic, however qualified, but of the critical community. Reasonable judgments are a collective product that shows some similarity to critical judgment in the arts and to empirical theory in science. In all these cases a group of qualified researchers or scholars engages in critical interplay, testing their observations, analyses, and ideas against each other in order to arrive at a tried judgment. This is ultimately an open, public process. Is there, then, a third way between presumed objectivity and inescapable subjectivity?

To continue these suggestive explorations by pursuing the question of normative judgment, let us consider on what grounds a building may be judged beautiful? An analogy may help propel the inquiry forward. Because architecture is often an aspect of a human or human-influenced environment and always requires a person to identify and appreciate it, architectural beauty can be judged, at least in part, by the aesthetic success of the human intervention.

Consider the case of an artifact, say, a stoneware bowl. What makes one bowl more beautiful than another? Clearly there are two sets of considerations, one objective and quantitative, the other based on the artistry of the potter, a qualitative, expert judgment. On the side of the first are such things as craftsmanship in the form of high quality clay, successful firing, even thickness of the sides, stable base, the surface and adhesion of the glaze. On the other side we can consider the quality of the overall design, its proportions and balance, the grace of the angle and curve of the sides, the color and sheen of the glaze, and all of these in the light of pictorial and sculptural values such as colors, proportions, balance, and perhaps also including qualities such as grace, and visual interest.
Now in judging a bowl based on these factors, some considerations, the quantitative ones, are determinable without extensive debate and fundamental disagreement, such as size and capacity in relation to projected use. However, the other, qualitative, considerations mentioned above clearly require a judge with extensive background and experience, a critic of the sort that Hume was describing. Such determinations are made all the time, with greater or lesser success, in competitions, as well as by other architects and architectural critics. It is my view that a similar process will illuminate aesthetic judgment in architecture.

The quantitative factors here are such things as topography and other physical features. Because architectural design is always part of a human environment, its functional success can be assessed. In the case of a working building, such as a school, a library, or an office building, its functionality is reflected in how well it is adapted to the physical conditions that are given, as well as by its success in fulfilling its practical purposes. In addition to the functionality of the building, we may add a consideration of data from the history of and current research into building preference, in addition to the common features of attractive buildings that we identified earlier. All these are basically quantitative assessments. However, to take them as reasons for valuing a building would be unforgiveably circular!

Now while such quantitative judgments can contribute to the evaluation of architectural success, they do not themselves generate fine perceptual discrimination or permit more than approximate designations and comparisons. Determining the aesthetic success of the human construction demands the experienced judgment of the architectural critic, who can bring an aesthetically informed and practiced understanding to the uniqueness of a design by means of a thorough perceptual inquiry. This requires considering its sensuous qualities, its temporal processes, and the ways in which the body participates with and activates the building – the entire and inclusive perceptual experience.
We have, then, a complex of factors that can help us identify and judge architectural beauty. All of these can be located and specified, although none is absolute. Some considerations are quantitative, some qualitative; some easily objectifiable, some not. Such factors need to be studied further and amplified, and careful procedures developed for applying them in judging specific buildings. Further research is needed into both the general conditions and the particular features of architecturally rewarding buildings, as well as into the full range of the critic’s contribution. Moreover, it is particularly important to recognize that all these factors are not additive but are interrelated in a complex field that includes the perceiver. Even though individual critics will vary in the acuteness of their observation and the sensitivity of their perception, reasonable normative judgment is both possible and actual.\textsuperscript{17} Applying them to specific buildings requires discriminating judgment and there is no substitute for the informed and discerning judgment of the architectural critic. At the same time it is essential to recognize that of these factors, three – namely, site, function, and place in the community – do not inhere in the structure itself, yet play a critical role in contributing to the judgment of architectural success and beauty, both. The fullness of the context of judgment does not make the assessment impossible or even impossibly qualified. On the contrary, it makes a reasonable and justifiable normative judgment both possible and useful.
NOTES

1 This essay is the second variation in a projected series on aesthetic judgment. The first variation, "On Judging Scenic Beauty," has appeared in *Aesthetic Culture* (Maahenki Co: 2007), pp. 57-75. The "theme" on which these papers are grounded is implicit and may only be inferred from them.

2 The rejection of aesthetic disinterestedness is a critical feature in the aesthetics of architecture that I have discussed at length elsewhere. See "Architecture as Environmental Design" in Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991) and "Architecture and the Aesthetics of Continuity" in Arnold Berleant, *Living in the Building: Toward an Aesthetics of Environment* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), among other sources. Rejecting aesthetic disinterestedness enters into the discussion here in the necessity to consider function as an important factor in the complex of features that contribute to the architectural synthesis that provides the grounds for judgments of aesthetic value.


4 These differ from the 'prejudices' Hume noted and from which the ideal critic should be free. Although they may share their irrationality, what distinguishes these cognitive preconceptions is that they claim a rational basis and, when they become explicit, they are justified on cognitive grounds.


6 The very foundation of what is distinctively human in perception is its character as a socially and historically achieved, and changing mode of action; and thereby invested with a cognitive, affective and teleological character which exemplifies it as a social, and not merely a biological or neurophysiological activity. What is more, it is not an activity of the perceptual system or of a specific sense-modality, but an activity of the whole organism. See Marx Wartofsky, "Perception, Representation, and the Forms of Action: Towards an Historical Epistemology" (Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster: Boston Colloquium for the Philosophy of Science, 1985).


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12 Beauty is, of course, the third and last of the central ideas in Vitruvius’s theory of architecture: *firmitas, utilitas*, and *venustas*, i.e., structural stability, utility or suitable spatial accommodation, and beauty or attractive physical appearance (cf. from its etymology in Venus).

13 We should not take the order of presentation here as an indication of relative importance. This will tend to emerge when considering individual cases. A further consideration arises with the question of the relation of any identification and classification of aesthetically significant architectural features with correlative features of art objects. But this question will not occupy us here.


