A Comparison of the Application to Architecture of the Ecological and Gestalt Approaches to Visual Perception

By

Frederick A. Jules
A COMPARISON OF
THE APPLICATION TO ARCHITECTURE
OF THE ECOLOGICAL AND GESTALT
APPROACHES TO VISUAL PERCEPTION

by
Frederick A. Jules

1984
PUBLICATIONS IN ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING

Center for Architecture and Urban Planning Research
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI  53201

Report R84-2

Additional copies of this report are available for $7.50 prepaid by writing the above address.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a federal agency.

This project is also supported by a matching grant from The Graduate School and the Department of Architecture at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

I would especially like to thank my research assistants, Frances Downing and Jill Johnson, for their diligent work and useful insights. It was a pleasure working with them.

[Signature]

Frederick Jules
## CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION** .................................................. 1  
  The Context of Theory ........................................... 2  
  The Selection of Theories ....................................... 3  
  The Relation Between the General Structure of Theories  
    in Architecture and Psychology .............................. 4  
  The Research Method ............................................ 6  
  Footnotes ....................................................... 8  

**COMPOSITION AT THE ECOLE DES BEAUX-ARTS** .................... 9  
  Geometry ....................................................... 9  
  Hierarchy ...................................................... 10  
  Mood or Tone ................................................... 14  
  Explicit Symbols ............................................... 15  
  Conclusions ................................................... 17  
  Footnotes and Illustrations ................................... 18  

**THE MODERN MOVEMENT** ........................................... 22  
  Collective Beliefs of the Modern Movement ..................... 23  
  The Bauhaus and Organic Architecture ......................... 30  
  Geometry ....................................................... 35  
  Hierarchy ...................................................... 36  
  Mood or Tone ................................................... 38  
  Explicit Symbols ............................................... 39  
  Footnotes and Illustrations ................................... 40  

**GESTALT THEORY** ................................................ 51  
  Footnotes and Illustrations ................................... 61  

**ECOLOGICAL THEORY** ............................................. 63  
  Footnotes ....................................................... 76  

**COMPARISON OF THEORIES AND THEIR ARCHITECTURAL**  
**EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS** ..................................... 79  
  Geometry ....................................................... 80  
    Platonic Form/Bauhaus Exercises/Grids, Romboids and  
    Free-form Objects and Organizations ....................... 81  
  Hierarchy ...................................................... 83  
    Consistency and Dominance/Unity/Object Recognition/  
    Man is the Measure/Place Recognition and Closure ....... 83  
  Mood or Tone ................................................... 88  
    Education in the Development of Mood and Tone/  
    The Mood and Tone of Place ................................ 89  
  Explicit Symbols ............................................... 91  
  Evaluation of the Psychological Theories ....................... 92  
  Educational Implications ....................................... 93  
  Summary ....................................................... 95  
  Footnotes and Illustrations ................................... 98  

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** .................................................. 99
APPENDIX A
The Ecole des Beaux-Arts
General Evolution ........................................ 102
Footnotes ................................................... 104

APPENDIX B
Selections from Vitruvius' The Ten Books on Architecture 105