

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a person's face. Their hands are raised, palms facing forward, positioned directly in front of their eyes. The person's eyes are visible through the fingers of the hands. The image has a blue and purple color cast.

The Thinking Hand

Existential
and Embodied
Wisdom in
Architecture

JUHANI
PALLASMAA



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Architecture

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Acknowledgements

The manuscript of *The Thinking Hand* draws on ideas and formulations developed in many of my former lectures. These prior contexts include: 'Lived space: embodied experience and sensory thought' (Copenhagen, 1999); 'Touching the world: lived space, vision and hapticity' (Barcelona, 2007); 'Space, place, memory and imagination: the temporal dimension of existential space' (Berkeley, 2007); 'Artistic generosity, humility and expression: reality sense and idealization in architecture' (Montreal, 2007); 'Matter, hapticity and time: language of matter and material imagination' (Almagro, 2007); and 'Selfhood and the world: lived space, vision and hapticity' (Vienna, 2008).

The preface to this book is partly based on the themes of my contribution to a literary symposium organised by the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia in 2007 that discussed issues in Marjorie O'Loughlin's book *Embodiment and Education: Exploring Creatural Existence* (Springer (Dordrecht), 2006).

I confess that I have become increasingly interested in and respectful of the historicity and collective layering of thought. As a reflection of this attitude I have replaced my personal formulations of ideas with quotes of texts by others whenever I have encountered these ideas in the books I have read.

I wish to mention especially the significance of two books that I happened to read while compiling material and themes for this text. I relied heavily on Frank R Wilson's book *The Hand: How Its Use Shapes the Brain, Language, and Human Culture* for anatomical and neurological facts. I should remind the reader that my education and professional background is that of an architect. Richard Sennett's recent book *The Craftsman* gave important support to my views on the essence of craft.

I want to thank my assistants in my architectural office in Helsinki – Marita Vehman, Arja Riihimäki, Senay Getachew and Philip Tidwell – for their help throughout the process of working on this book.

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With warmest regards,
Juhani Pallasmaa

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Hands are part of a person's individual persona and character, but they also perform their independent actions, and are crucial in human communication with a language of their own. Matteo Zambelli, *You Are More Than One*, 2006. Collage made by Photoshop 7.0. The process of making the Collage:
1. I dropped a rectangular glass wrapped in a cardboard

envelope from the third level of my house. After this, I put each piece of glass on a glass table, where I recomposed the original rectangular glass, now broken into pieces.
2. I asked my parents and relatives to put their left or right hand under the pieces of glass, and took several shots.
3. I downloaded the photos on my computer, and assembled them in Photoshop 7.0. When

assembling the photos, I didn't always use the entire hands, some of the images had just one or two details of the whole hand, others were doubled and blurred. I created different layers for each piece of the hand, superimposed all the layers with different gradients of transparency, and merged all these layers for the final photos.

Introduction

Embodied Existence and Sensory Thought

‘Briefly what I am proposing is that the psychology of the mature human being is an unfolding, emergent, oscillating, spiralling process marked by progressive subordination of older, lower-order behaviour systems to newer, higher-order systems as man’s existential problems change.’

Clare W Graves¹

Western consumer culture continues to project a dualistic attitude towards the human body. On the one hand we have an obsessively aestheticised and eroticised cult of the body, but on the other, intelligence and creative capacity are equally celebrated as totally separate, or even exclusive individual qualities. In either case, the body and the mind are understood as unrelated entities that do not constitute an integrated unity. This separation is reflected in the strict division of human activities and work into physical and intellectual categories. The body is regarded as the medium of identity and self-presentation, as well as an instrument of social and sexual appeal. However, its significance is understood merely in its physical and physiological essence, but undervalued and neglected in its role as the very ground of embodied existence and knowledge as well as the full understanding of the human condition.²