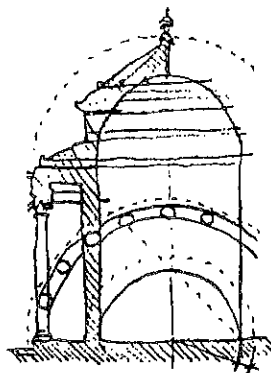


Norman Crowe  
& Paul Laseau:

VISUAL NOTES, pp. 1-9, 35-49

# VISUAL NOTES

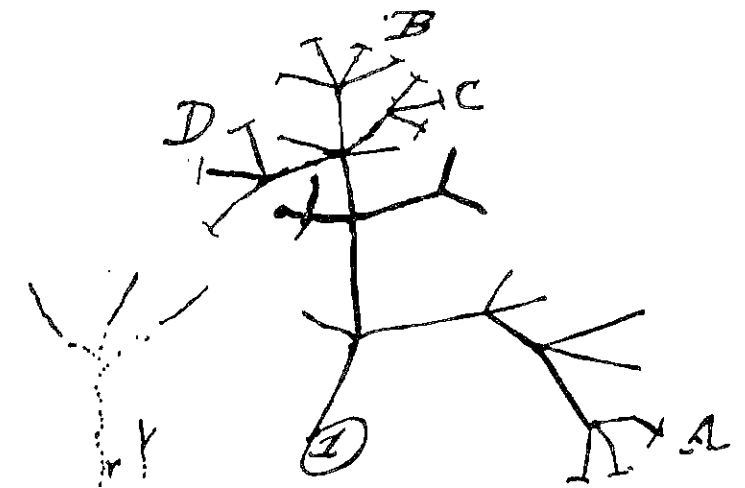
## for Architects and Designers



Norman Crowe and Paul Laseau

## Introduction

1



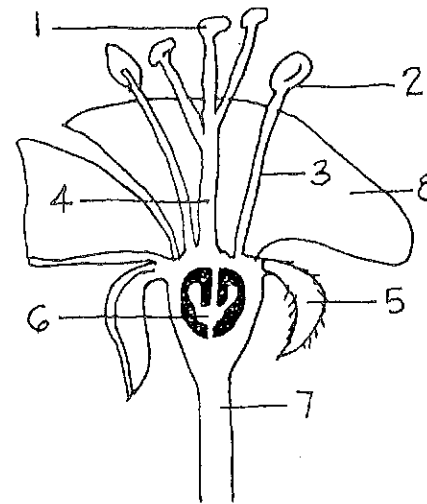
1-1 Charles Darwin's tree diagrams, representing traceable evolution in biological species.

Visual notes are simply the graphic equivalent of written notes. "Taking visual notes" refers to recording information which is primarily visual and, therefore, could not be recorded as effectively with words.

Keeping notes has always been an effective hedge against an imperfect memory. Moreover, the act of taking notes, selecting and sifting through them, is an important tool for creativity. Keeping a notebook of observations and experiences is a very old custom. Once visual notes were seen by architects to be nearly as important as verbal ones. Sketching was a common part of travel and education for the young architect.

Since the availability of easy, inexpensive photography, however, visual note-taking has declined. With this decline has come a decline in visual literacy in general. We have come to rely upon a camera to do all that notational sketches once did. Of course, a camera can do much of what sketching once did and it can perform certain tasks much faster and better. But a camera cannot record concepts, underlying structure, schematic organization, or anything else that the eye cannot see all at once. Although the camera can be used

creatively, it does not *require* any more than a superficial level of interaction between the observer and the view. It can become a comparatively neutral instrument which neither demands a high degree of selectivity nor promotes out of necessity a very high level of understanding. Le Corbusier said that cameras "get in the way of seeing." Because visual notes do not accompany verbal ones as frequently as they once did, we believe that something valuable has been lost. It is our purpose to encourage the development and use of visual skills, especially in the form of simple, rapid, effective visual notation. We contend that the stigma against the use of graphic skills by those other than artists is based upon a false assumption that one must be an artist, heavily endowed with artistic aptitudes, in order to draw. Although a certain kind of drawing is the province of artists, that should not discourage others from using drawings to communicate information any more than one might refuse to ever write anything down because one is not an accomplished journalist or author. Making visual notes can be useful and effective and it can also be a particularly enjoyable endeavor. Once one has gotten beyond the notion that one's drawings have to be works of art, the activity of drawing gains a momentum of its own and inevitably provides a certain satisfaction of its own.



1-2

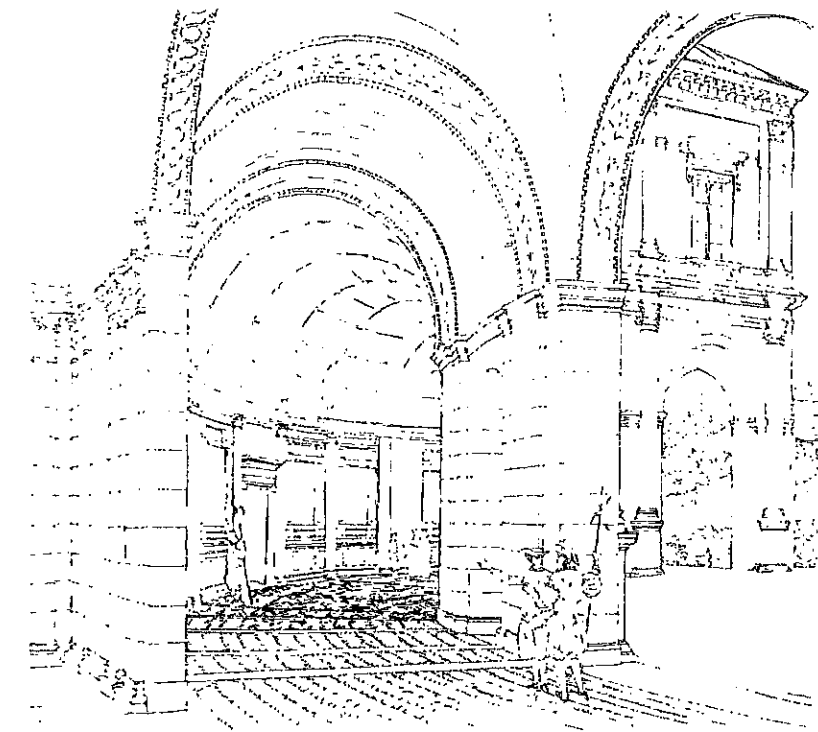
### THE USES OF VISUAL NOTES

Who would have need for making visual notes? It might be: an engineer inspecting machinery, a scientist or laboratory technician recording a particular arrangement of apparatus, a landscape architect noting an exemplary design, an architect recording important details of a building which he intends to remodel or expand, a traveler wishing to record what lies beyond myriad impressions as he explores a new place, or a student simply taking notes during a slide lecture in biology, botany, anthropology, architectural or art history or other subject where visual form is a concern.

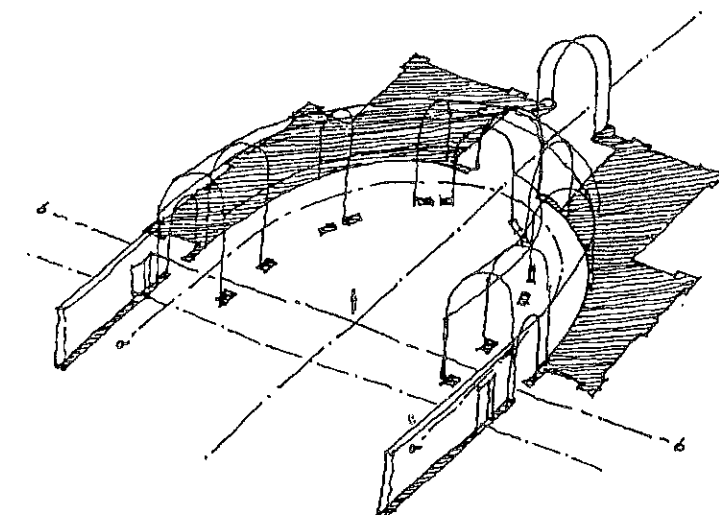
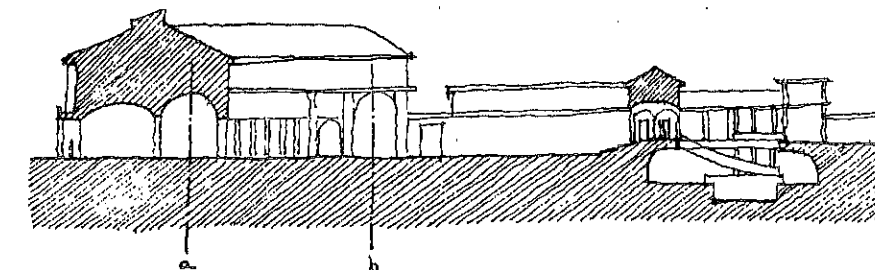
Visual notation has an additional important use. It records that which *cannot* be seen directly by the eye or by a camera. A laboratory technician draws a diagram of the assembly of various apparatus; it would not be useful for him to draw a picture of the laboratory. The architect's drawing demonstrates how the building he is studying is organized, a plan of how the circulation system works, or how and where the structural elements relate to the other parts of the building. A botanist draws an exploded view of a portion of a plant, showing how sustenance is carried through the veining to distant parts of the plant and how the flower's reproductive parts fit together. Visual notes record information which has been selected to be stored, studied, and communicated. Such drawings are often analytical; they take apart and describe better than simply represent as in a picture. Compared to an artist's drawings, like a

sketch of a scene, visual notes require a lot of thought and comparably less skill because they are intended to disclose selective information, while the sketch of a scene requires little forethought but considerable skill to become an accurate depiction.

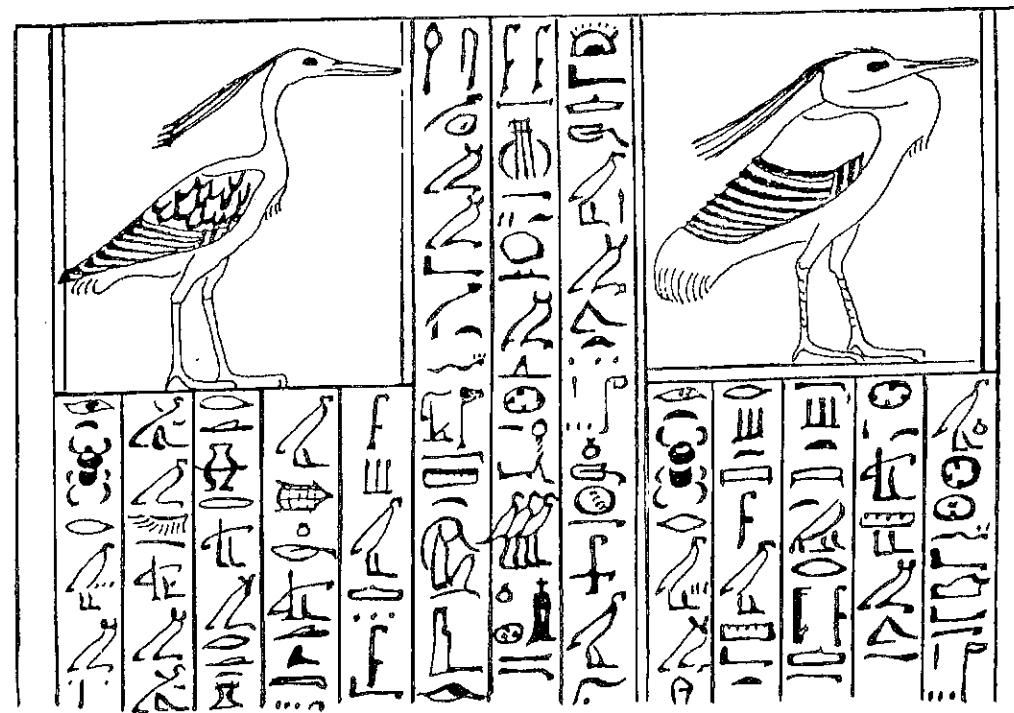
There is, however, still another important dimension to visual notation. We may be left with the impression that this form of graphic communication is only of concern to technologists and other professionals who require it for the conduct of their work and that it is simply a useful, marketable skill. The effect, however, runs deeper. Consider an analogous situation: the effect of written language upon thoughts and actions. Not only does written language, with its commonly accepted vocabulary and grammar, communicate ideas, but it actually conditions the way we think. Moreover, it communicates our own thoughts, concepts, and ideas back to us. We use it to organize our thoughts as one does when one assembles what he has learned about particular topic, records his thoughts and, finally, "gets it all down" in writing. It is in the act of "getting it all down" that new associations and understanding emerge as a result of giving order to what would otherwise be merely random thoughts and inert, factual circumstances. It is not surprising, therefore, that societies which had not developed a written language are not comparable with literate societies in terms of the quality of their accomplishments.



1-3 Arcade of the Villa Giulia in Rome, based on a drawing by Lutarouilly.



1-4 Visual notes of the same building, conveying a different kind of information than the pictorial drawing above.



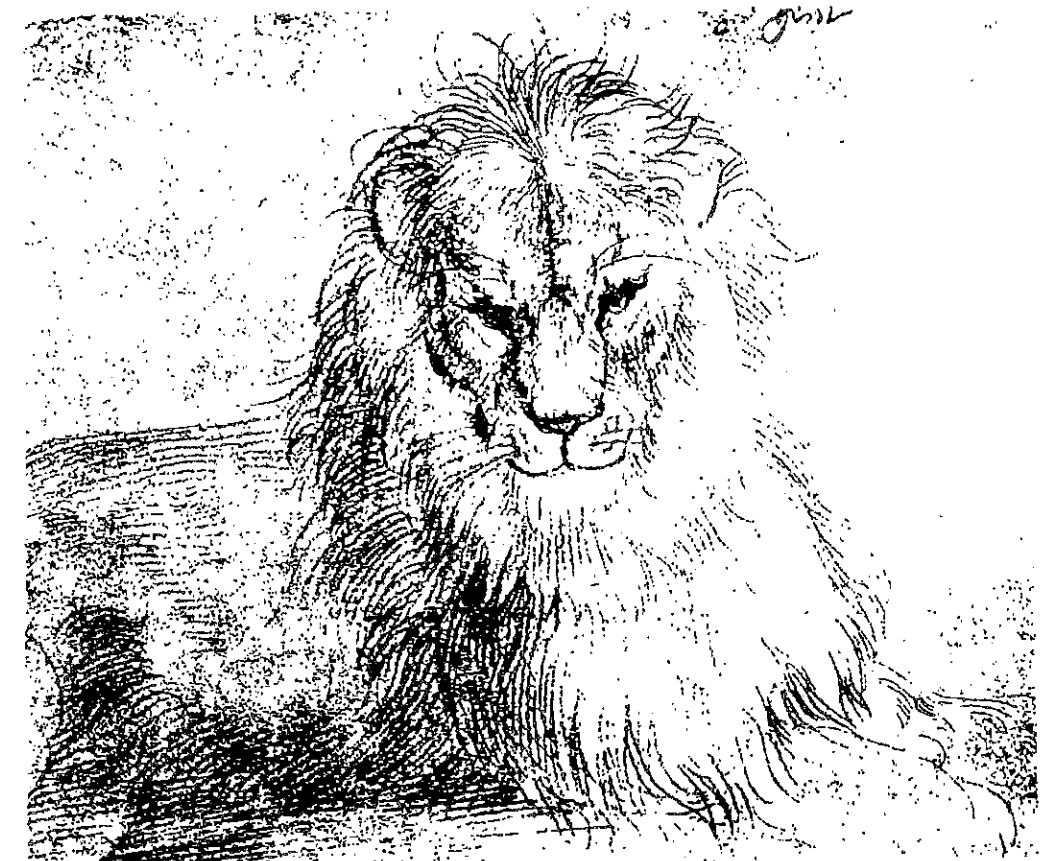
1-5 Egyptian hieroglyphics: Words were formed by picture-symbols. Although a clumsy form of writing, the verbal and visual world were integrated in many early forms of writing.

Written language does have its limitations. Visual information is not as easily conveyed by the written word. Skillful writers have given us a special literary richness by describing something they wish us to see and feel, such as Balzac's description of the interior of an apartment on the Place des Vosges, or the Roman naturalist and writer Pliny's description of his villas in Italy in letters to his friends. But literature cannot convey all that seeing can provide. An amusing illustration is Durer's drawing of a walrus; it looks more like a hairless, wrinkled puppy with tusks! When Durer drew from life, his accuracy was unquestionable. But he had only briefly seen a walrus, and had only that fleeting memory and an elaborate verbal description from which to reconstruct an image of the animal.

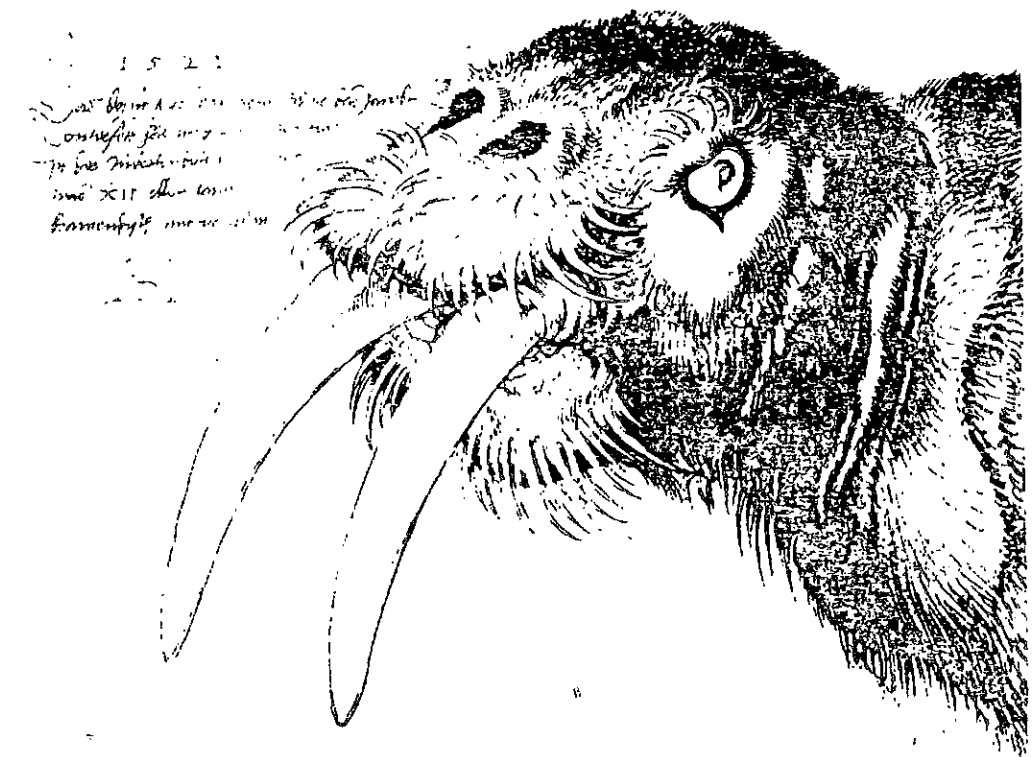
It follows that just as verbal description is a source for a rich and profound level of understanding, visual literacy can provide its own access to a level of richness and understanding which would otherwise be unreachable. In our earlier description of

the engineer, technician, scientist, and others making visual notes in order to facilitate their work, the impression might be that such notation is simply a means for the transfer of information. Certainly notes might serve only as information transfer and they might only be perceived as such. Although basic factual information is inert and without an intrinsic value, the very act of gathering the material, selecting, sorting, and "getting it down" can disclose new associations and promote a deeper understanding than any superficial observation could provide.

Communication, whether it is through literature, mathematics, music, or graphics, is at the very heart of creativity which thrives upon relationships drawn between symbols and ideas. The extent of one's creativity is related to the depth of one's experience of the world in which one lives. Imagination is built upon the richness of perceptions gleaned from an active and conscious participation in that world of thoughts and substance.



1-6 A lion drawn from life by Albrecht Durer.



1-7 A walrus drawn by Albrecht Durer. It is believed that this drawing was made from memory of a dead walrus he had seen.



1-8

### VISUAL LITERACY

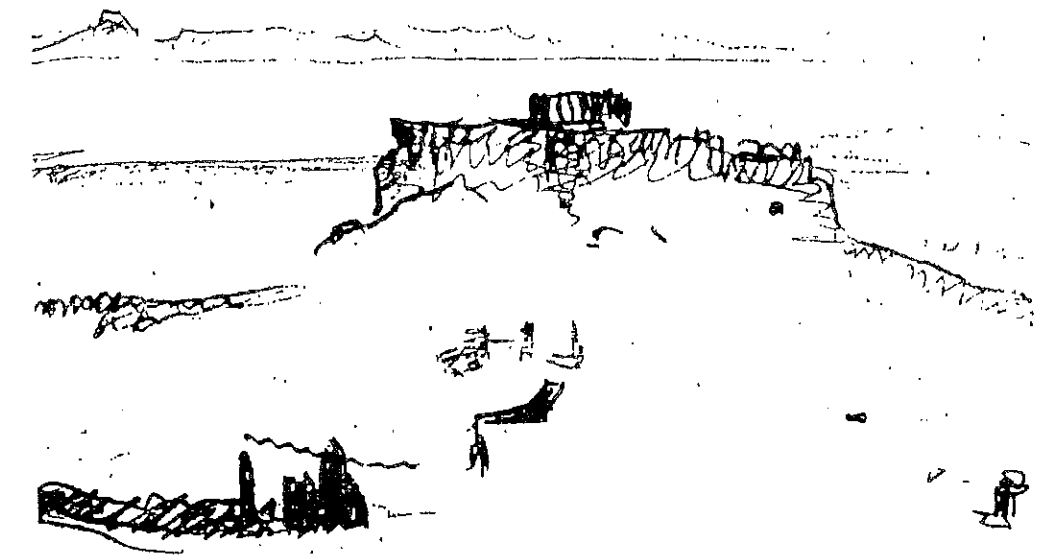
Verbal literacy is considered an essential skill in an industrialized, technologically-based society. Most of us have learned how to take verbal or written notes. We learn to understand others and express ourselves in a written language usually by the completion of high school. But understanding and expressing visual messages is a skill that remains poorly developed.

Visual literacy includes two skills: visual acuity and visual expression. Visual acuity is an intense ability to see information or

multiple messages in one's environment with clarity and accuracy. When most people look at a house, they see a roof, windows, doors, or the colors of the walls. An artist also sees the lightness or darkness of the colors, the way the sun casts shadows, and the reflections in the windows. The architect also sees the types of materials used, the details of a window frame or eave, and the accessories such as gutters, downspouts and lights. The sociologist may see which windows have curtains drawn, what symbols are presented in the style of the

## A Journal

3



3-1 The Acropolis in Athens, drawn by Charles Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) during his travels as a youth. SPADM, Paris/VAGA, New York 1982.

One's first motivation to make visual notes is likely to come from a very practical circumstance. Such notes are likely to be an extension of usual verbal note-taking occasions, such as students at lectures, or participants in a business meeting or a reader extracting essential elements from a book, an article, or a report. Once it becomes as easy to record visual thoughts as verbal ones, not only is an effective new access to practical information gained, but a new world of remarkable richness is opened as well. Beyond recording specific information for a particular and rather narrow purpose, lies the possibility of keeping a journal.

Keeping a journal is an old custom. We distinguish at this point between a notebook and a journal. The difference is mostly one of attitude and intention. A notebook is used to record notes in response to specific tasks such as remembering the significant points made in a lecture or book or gathering information in order to solve a particular problem in the course of one's occupation or avocation. A journal's function is to gather thoughts and images as they might arise, without regard to immediate priorities or assigned tasks. The word "journal" comes from the Latin word for "day," reflecting the intention of recording thoughts, experiences, and images on a daily basis. One need not think of a journal, however, as requiring daily feeding for its sustenance, but the implica-

tion is nonetheless that it is a long-term venture.

As the journal stretches over time, as over a journey or over several years, it becomes a record of a portion of its author's life. Looking back over a journal provides a journey back over events which might otherwise have been largely forgotten. Although a journal may be seen as an instrument for nostalgic reminiscences, it can do much more. It can serve to bring together thoughts and images which would otherwise be separated from one another by time, thereby preventing them from building upon one another as they might if seen in closer proximity. The writer Edward Fischer summed it up very well in an article which encouraged his readers to keep a journal: "Judged by the days, life does not make sense. Judged by the years, things add up and a plan emerges. A good reason to keep a journal is to have the consolation of seeing patterns form."<sup>7</sup>

As a journal grows it becomes something more than a record. Again according to Edward Fischer, it "encourages shaping those blurred notions and hunches into ideas you may be willing to stand behind. It helps you turn your inner chaos into something of a cosmos." The "cosmos" he spoke of is a personal one on one hand and an objective one on the other. Objective observations and personal responses are set down for

photographs, but they are, of necessity, more selective. The photograph accurately duplicates all that can be seen from a specific vantage point; the representative sketch describes those parts of a view which are of special interest to the person sketching. While a photograph is a reproduction of what is visible, the sketch is a record of *how one sees* that which is visible. Producing sketches and "reading" other people's sketches provide both a view of the subject and an education about a variety of ways of seeing.

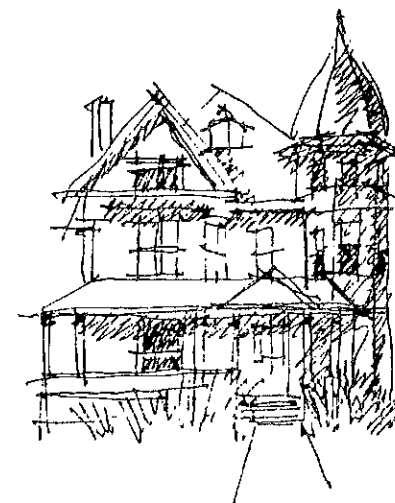
In visual communication, *abstraction* can be seen as a "simplification toward a more intense and distilled meaning."<sup>2</sup> We are literally bombarded with visual information at any given moment; in order to function in the world we must create some order and meaning out of what we see. This is basically the process of abstraction called perception. If we visit someone's house, the whole facade may be visible but we notice the front walk and front door because they are important to our intention to enter the house. While perception usually operates on a subconscious, reflex level, abstraction can be brought to a conscious, purposeful level when incorporated in a visual message. Abstractions may place emphasis on certain parts of a representational sketch such as the pattern of windows in a house; or they may be illustrations of that which cannot be seen such as the probable structural system of the house.

*Symbolism* is also a form of simplification of visual messages but it employs a surrogate or substitute image for what can actually be seen. In place of a representational drawing of a specific house we can use a symbol which most people accept as standing for the general concept "house." The advantage of using such a symbol is that it can be quickly drawn and miniaturized so that many symbols can be shown in the same space it takes to draw one house. These symbols can be arranged in an abstract "environment" in which the sequence, position, or grouping of the symbols conveys additional information.

A variety of examples of representational, abstract, and symbolic drawings can be found in other books. A partial list of sources is included in the bibliography for this book; and specific examples of drawing techniques are included in chapter 5.



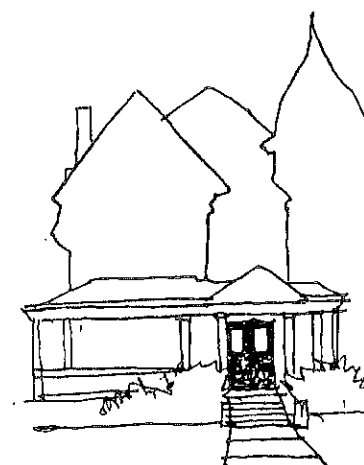
1-10A Representative sketches.



1-10B



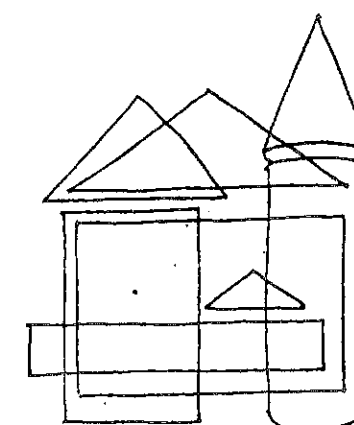
1-10C



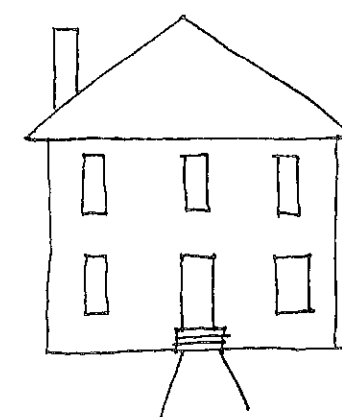
1-11A Abstract sketches.



1-11B



1-11C



1-12A Symbolic sketches.

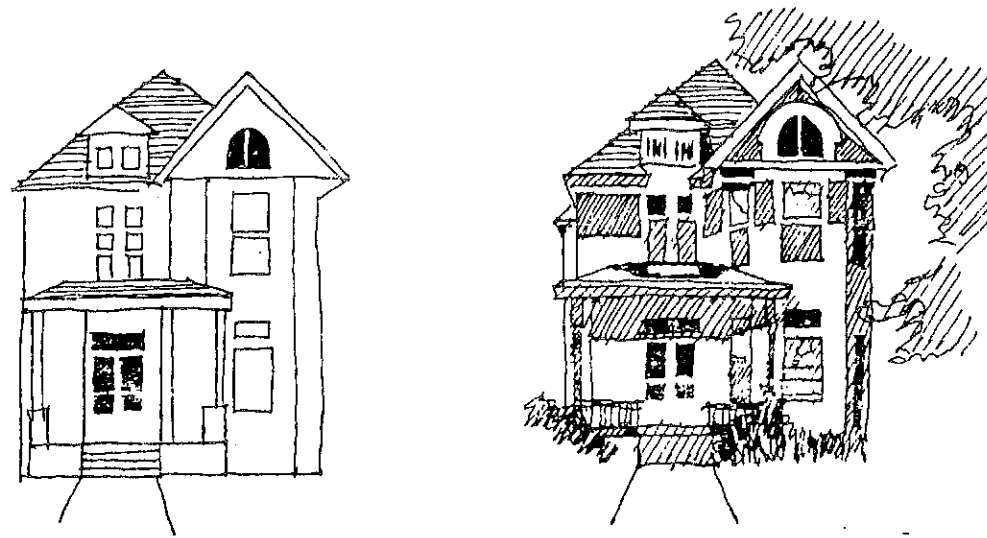


1-12B



1-12C





1-9

house, or how well the house is maintained. Visual expression is the ability to initiate visual messages. It is most strongly exhibited by people such as artists, designers, choreographers, photographers, or architects; but it is important to everyone. While visual acuity is concerned with the visual messages we receive, visual expression is concerned with the visual messages we send. Just as listening and speaking are related but distinct skills, seeing and expressing are interdependent but separate. Seeing is a necessary prelude to

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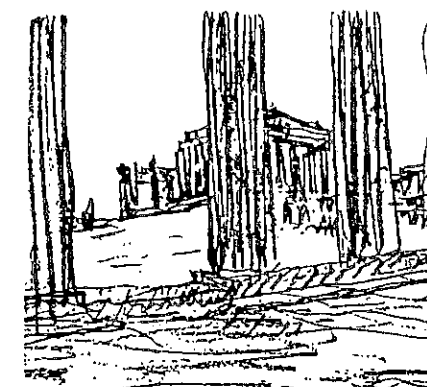
visual expression. But to achieve visual literacy both must be consciously developed. Since most readers will not sit with these skills, they represent both a goal and a benefit of visual note-taking.

In *A Primer of Visual Literacy* D. A. Dondos has identified three levels of visual messages.<sup>1</sup> They are representation, abstraction, and symbolism. *Representation* seeks to accurately record what we can actually see or experience. Representative sketches function much as do

reconsideration at another time. Fischer was referring to a written journal, but it follows that a journal which contains both written and visual works can be even more vital. The cosmos such a journal helps to build and serves to explore is composed both of thoughts, and of the images which generate them. According to G. K. Chesterton: "There is at the back of every artist's mind something like a pattern or a type of architecture. The original quality in any man of Imagination is imagery. It is a thing like the landscape of his dreams; the sort of world he would like to make or in which he would wish to wander; the strange flora and fauna of his own secret planet; the sort of thing he likes to think about. This general atmosphere, the pattern or structure of growth, governs all his creations, however varied."<sup>8</sup>

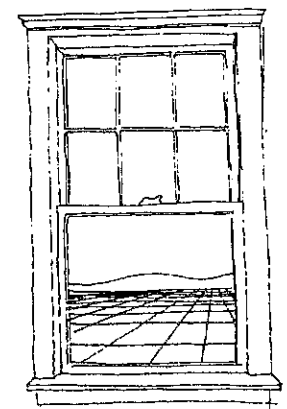
In this chapter we have selected and reassembled pages from a journal. In doing so, we hope to convey the flavor as well as the utility of keeping a journal. As the journal progresses, discoveries are made, incidences that are separated by time and place are brought together, and patterns begin to emerge. The importance of this particular journal does not lie in the subjects it records but rather in the way they have been recorded and in the relationships which arise from their having been brought together. We have edited out pages so that the journal will not tire a reader with superfluity. In this respect, this journal is not an entirely realistic one. It is an assembly of related and nearly related observations brought together more closely than they would otherwise be so that we can demonstrate how a journal works and we can indicate what a journal can accomplish.

A discussion of literature or theater, for instance, must consider the content as well as the form of what is being considered. In this discussion of a journal we, likewise, discuss *what is being recorded* as well as *how it is recorded* because these two qualities are impossible to separate from one another. Therefore, there arises a sort of story-within-a-story as the journal progresses. On one hand there is our primary concern for demonstrating techniques for recording information and for showing how various bits of information interact, and on the other is the importance of understanding the information and thoughts that are being recorded so that technique and interaction can be understood. The notes consist of detailed investigations which were the result of specific assignments and of fragments of journeys and happenstance discoveries. Specific assignments result in what we term "case studies"; they cover a whole subject with some degree of thoroughness. The fragments and happenstance notes arrest what would otherwise have been fleeting images. In this way, by combining purposeful working notes in the form of case studies, with fragmentary thoughts in a journal we hope to suggest the breadth and potential inherent in visual notation. The best way to understand a journal is to proceed through it one page at a time along a concatenation of events and discoveries. Since each "episode" is an involved and rather complex event, they are best understood by "getting into them" along with the author. In so doing, you will share the enjoyment of discovery. You should consider this chapter as a story, told by the one who experienced it, to recount those experiences and to show what those experiences and observations lead to.



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3-3

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3-4

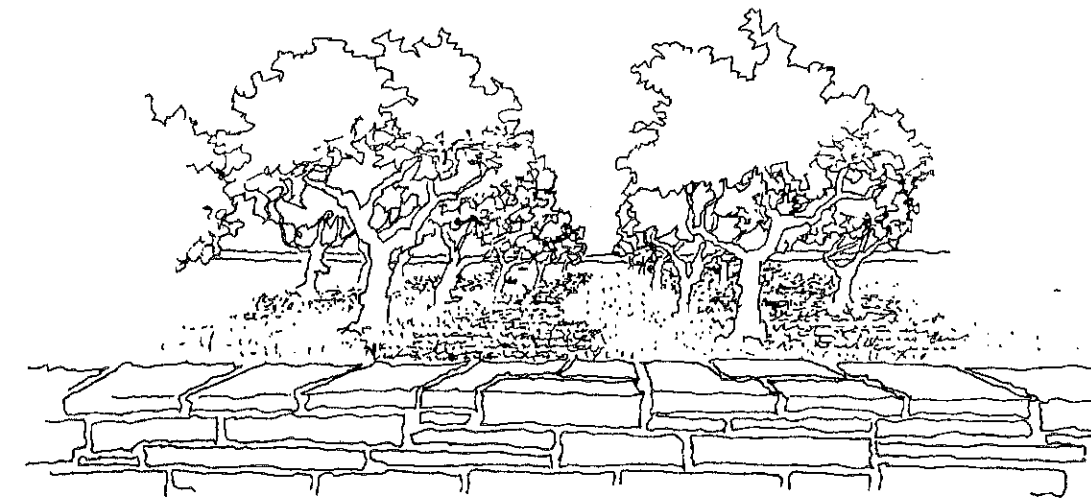
9-18-77 to 7-5-82  
JOURNAL

- Farm Complexes/Brittanny and Normandy — Sept. 18, '77
- Courtyards/Tuscany — Oct. 1, '77
- Castelvecchio/Verona — Oct. 17, '77
- American Academy lecture (G. Arnheim)/Rome — Feb. 3, '78
- The Certosa/Pavia — Feb. 5, '78
- Truli and the olive groves/Alberobello — Mar. 6, '78
- Casa del Fascio/Como — Mar. 16, '78
- Tobacco Company offices/Rome — Apr. 10, '78
- Windows/Lund — June 2, '78
- Stockholm city plan/on flight from Helsinki — June 14, '78
- Rowhouses/Philadelphia — June 16, '78
- Midwest farm buildings/Southern Iowa — May 17, '79
- Midwest vernacular farm house-ditts./Iowa, Ill. — Aug. 19, '79
- Place des Vosges/Paris — May 11, 12, '81
- Traditional Mediterranean windows/Rome — June 2, '81
- Study of town organization/Urbino — June 10, 13, '81
- Thomas Jefferson's Quad/Univ. of Virginia — June 21, '81

3-2 View of the Propylaea by Charles Jeanneret (Le Corbusier). A journal places scattered events in perspective, to help turn "chaos into something of a cosmos." SPADM, Paris/VAGA, New York 1982.<sup>1</sup>

3-5

3-6-78



Alberobello

The ancient Romans had a term for it, *genius loci*, or sense of place. Apparently it was a very comprehensive concept, having to do with all the qualities of a place which, in combination, make it unique and special. The term could apply to a city or a region, or something so small as a grove of trees or the rooms and courtyards of a building. The architect and theorist, Christian Norberg-Schulz, maintains that this is a concept which remains as important to be aware of today as it was in Roman times.<sup>9</sup> For a designer, the sense of place is particularly important. Unless we understand the various qualities which come together to provide the essence of a place, we cannot modify that place without risking the destruction of its valuable characteristics.

Photographs or accurate drawings of a place, a small town for instance, would depict certain aspects that are important to the experience of it, but experience is much more elaborate than simply seeing something from several fixed points of view as pictures must do. Of course, no medium or combination of media can substitute for experiencing the place first hand. But words, pictures, and visual notes together can convey much of that which contributes to an overall character. Effective visual notes, words, and photographs can be particularly informative for subsequent design work which is either of a similar nature or which involves modifications to that place itself.

3-6

10-1-77



Tuscany

The following case studies and notes are concerned with the total unique identity of interesting places and experiences and with the characteristic details of which they are composed. The notes do not substitute for the experiences, but they convey essential characteristics which, when coupled with comparable experiences in the reader's own background, reproduce something of the flavor of the real thing.

Most importantly the process of compiling these notes required a thorough and especially thoughtful effort by the person who wrote and drew them, thereby inducing a deeper understanding of what was being seen than would ever have resulted from a

relatively passive "tourist" visit. The act of making these notes required a close look at fundamental relationships, as each successive effort led to another discovery which, in turn uncovered more questions about the nature of the place.

We have included a photograph of places being investigated so that the reader can compare the drawings with pictorial reality, and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the essential characteristics of the place. The written notes are rather brief, owing to the knowledge of the writer and his reliance upon other sources of information such as books, maps, and brochures.

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3-7



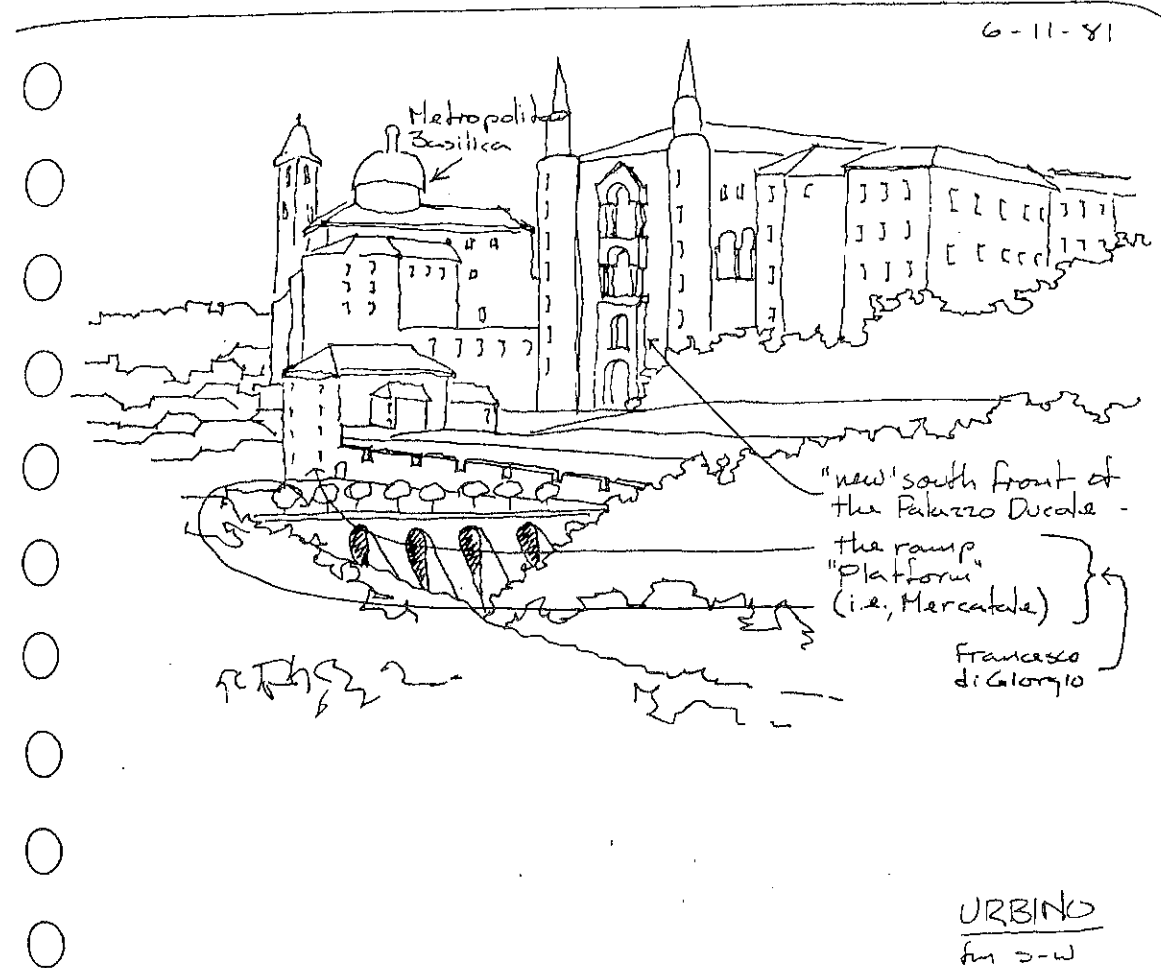
Our first case study is of a small Italian hill town which is said to be "in perfect balance." Urbino's population, economy, history, and its relationship with the hinterland are thought by many to constitute a perfect ratio with one another, thereby making it a place worthy of careful study. "Perfection" in such issues as these is a moot point, of course, but many observers find Urbino to possess a certain ambience of balanced forces and a high level of refinement. Although it is not possible to prove in a quantifiable way, it would be difficult to deny that there is a certain kind of perfection there.

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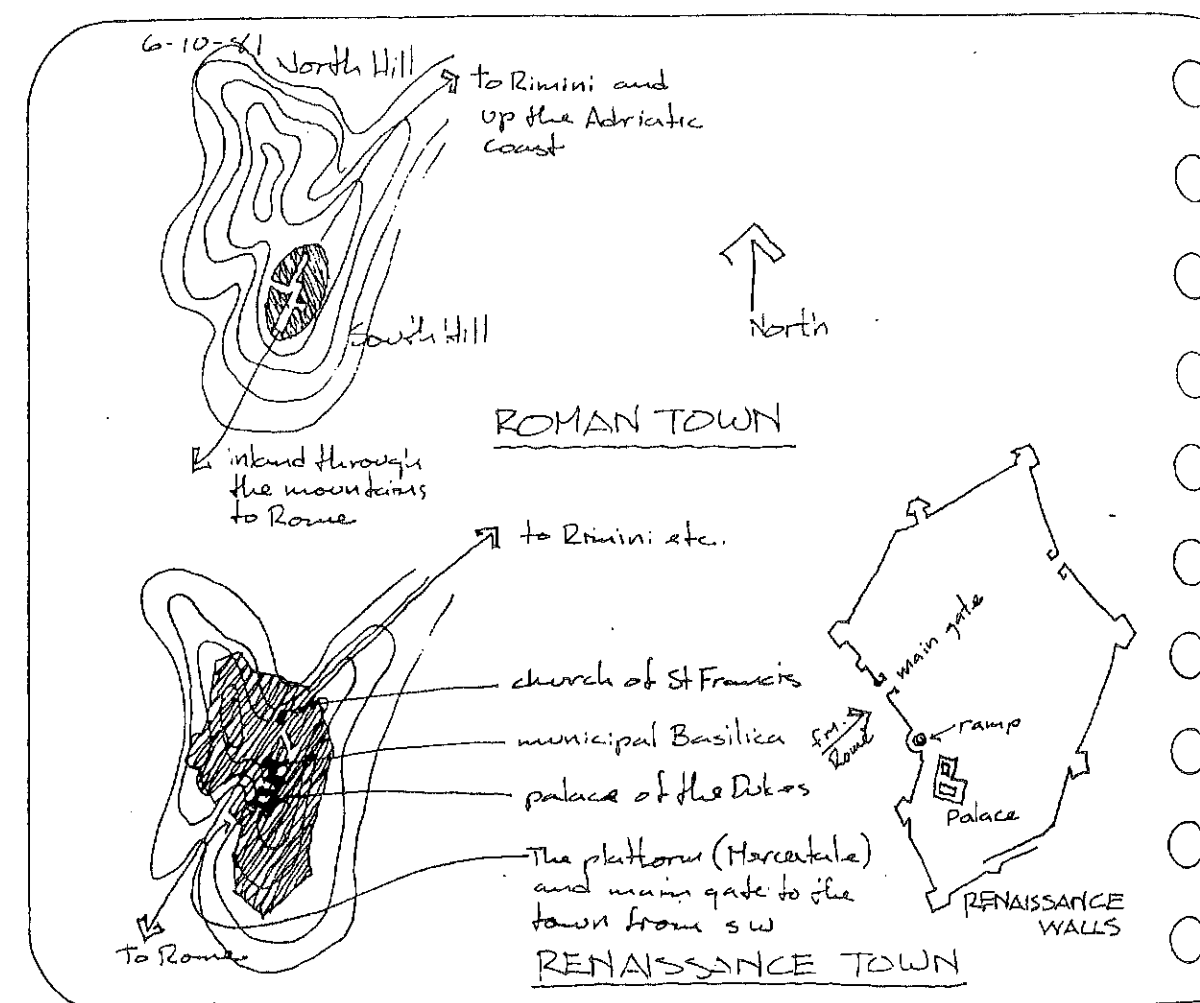
The first entry in the journal from a visit to Urbino reads: "Thursday, June 11—approached Urbino from Rome in early evening. A remarkable view of the town from this vantage point, about 1500 meters s.w. of the gate through the wall beneath the palace. At this time of evening the sun illuminates the city from this direction and provides a remarkable introduction to the town."



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3-9

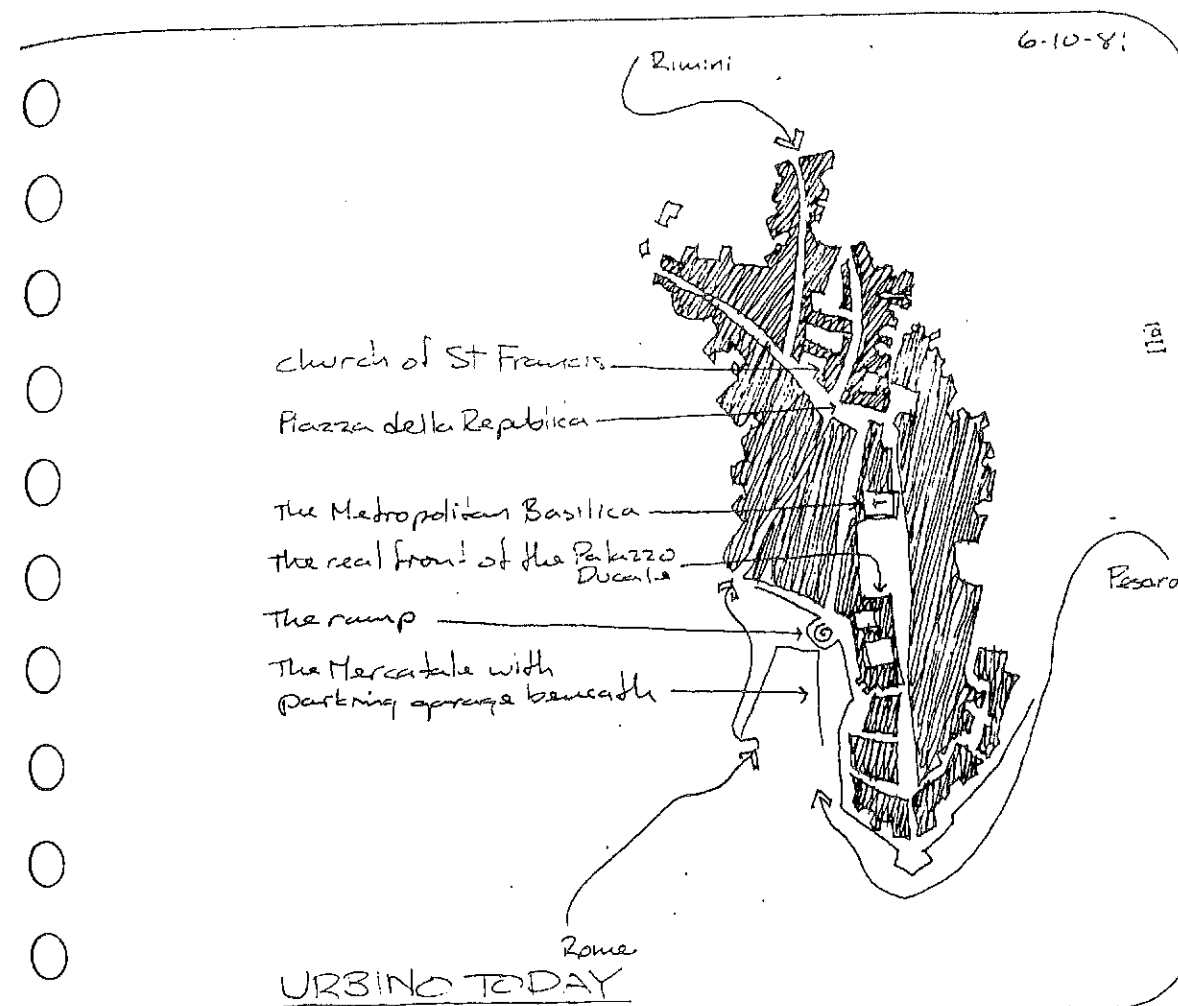


The next journal entry outlined the history of this place and provided some explanation of its form and circumstances. Although these verbal notes were lengthy and detailed, it is only important here to grasp the essential characteristics which conditioned the exploration of the town. Especially important to understanding the form of the town is to be able to equate what one can see there today with the historical circumstances which created this form. Notes concerning how the city began as a Roman town on the south hill, spread to the north hill in medieval times, and how Renaissance architects helped to join the two parts by embellishing the piazza which lay in the saddle between them, were drawn from history and guidebooks and placed in the journal along with corresponding plan

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drawings of the town. Also included in the journal though not reproduced here, were references to a good restaurant, the location of two principal hotels, notes on paintings displayed in the Ducal Palace and so forth. In other words, the journal has become a working tool for exploring the town. It holds practical as well as esoteric information, some of which was recorded in the notebook before leaving for the Urbino visit, and it provides space for collecting information in the form of drawings, diagrams, notes, etc. during the course of the exploration. The journal, used in this way, is a comprehensive tool, and not just a document for later reference. The notebook used for the journal is seen as a necessary accoutrement to travel along with passport, traveler's checks, guidebooks, and umbrella.

3-10

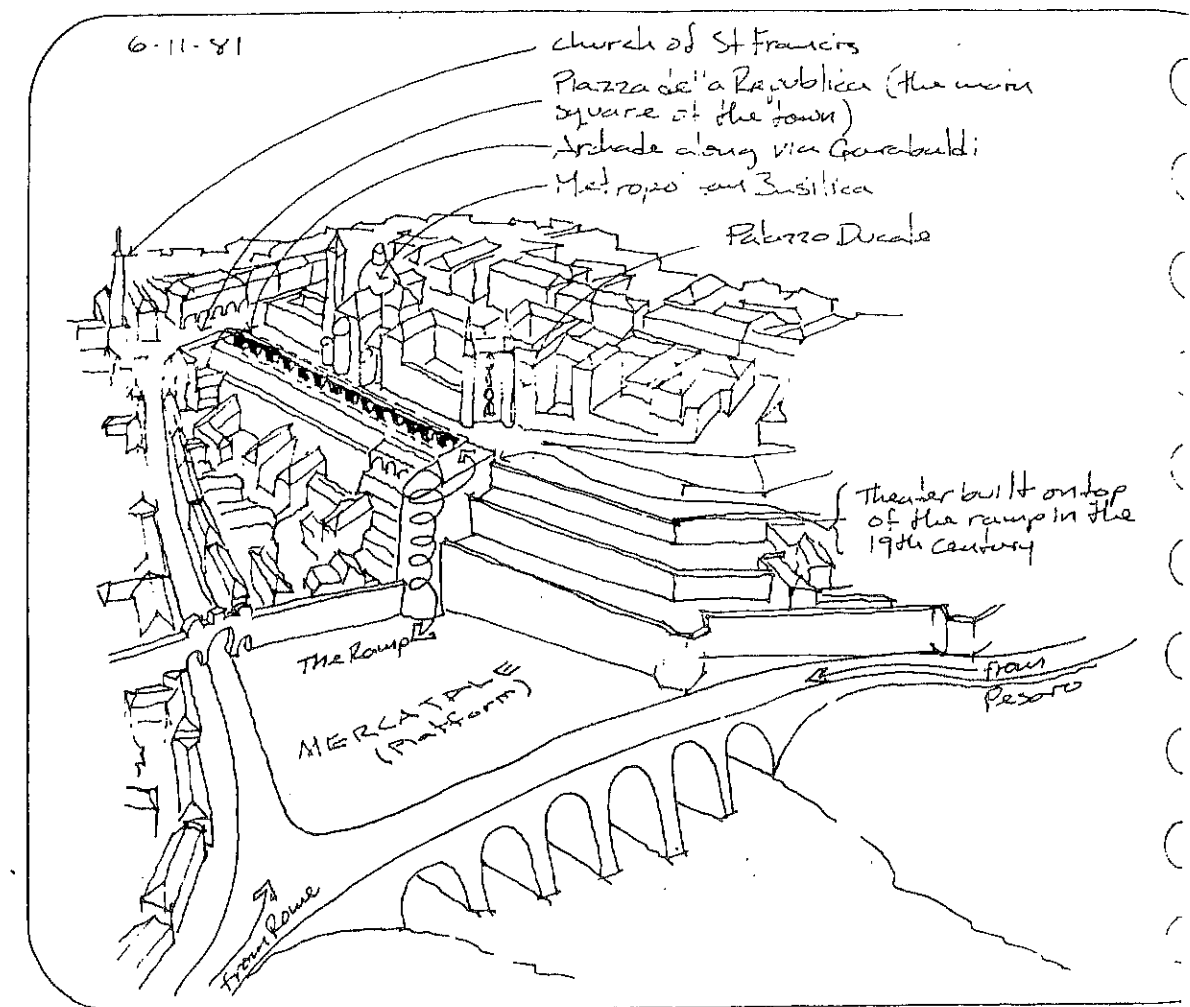


Urbino, like many other Italian provincial centers, is built atop a hill, actually atop two hills with a slight saddle between them. The town's main square, the Piazza della Repubblica, is located in this slight saddle and, along with the adjacent church of St. Francis, acts as a sort of hinge between the two parts of town on the north and the south hills. This is not quite evident, however, from the vantage point described above. What makes this vantage point along the road from Rome so remarkable is the way in which the town builds up from the base of the hill to a culmination in the two turrets of the Palazzo Ducale, or Palace of the Dukes. Further, the starting place of this build-up of forms is accentuated by a broad platform at the base of the hill, marking the base of the old defensive walls and

providing a datum for the collection of architectural forms above it.

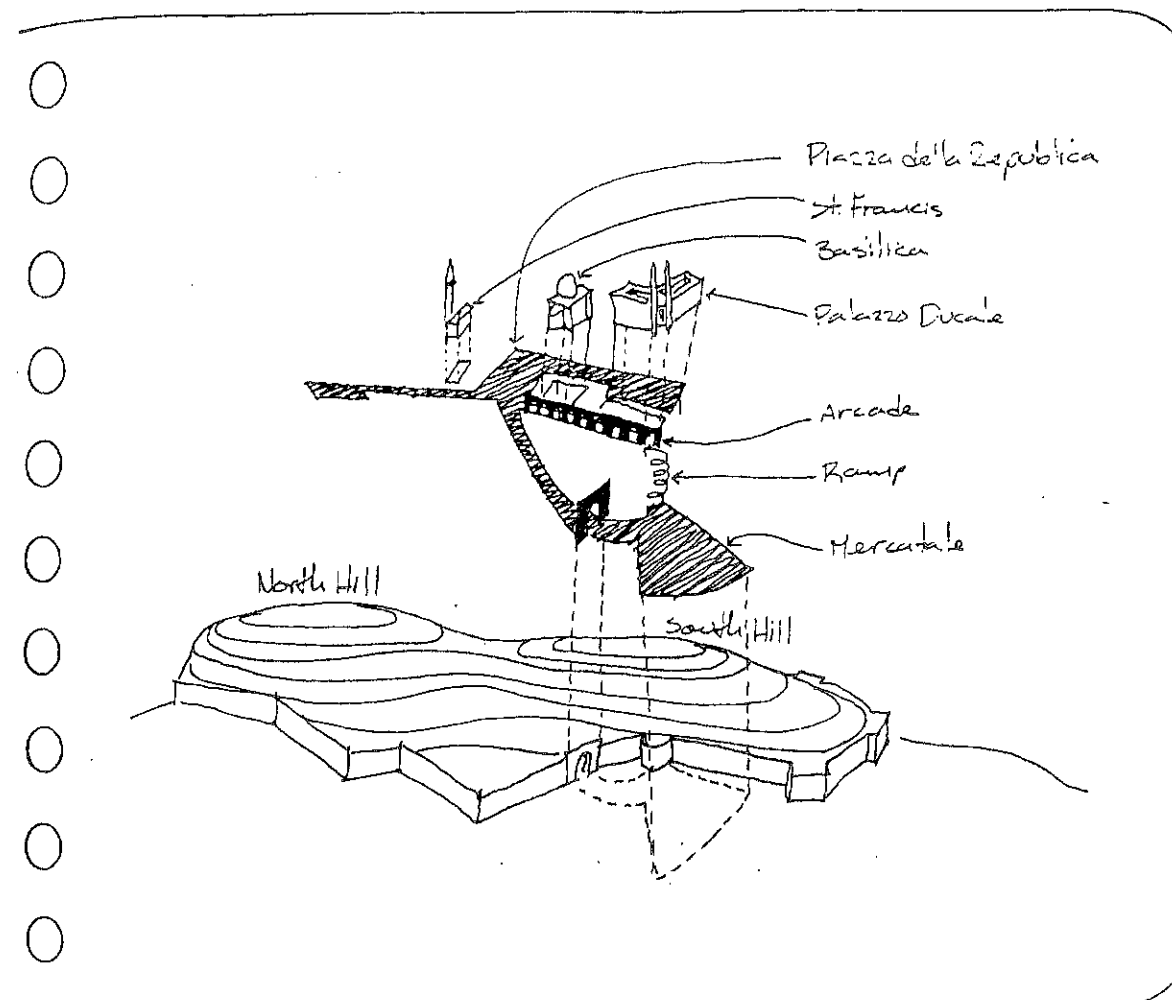
The town appears today essentially as it did in the Renaissance after architects of that period reconciled portions of the town with one another by their designs for certain buildings, circulation ways, walls, and open spaces. The map drawings were reproduced from information in two books to bring them together in the journal to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the town's form. Of particular importance is how the town was "reoriented" after the medieval period so that it faced the south toward the approach from Rome, and away from the route from Rimini, the most important approach for several hundred years prior.

3-11



Analytical drawings depicting the town as it can only be seen in the mind's eye help to explain the parts which were important to its reorientation in the Renaissance. This drawing shows how a platform was positioned across the valley to provide a "front porch" to the town as well as a convenient market square, and how the twin towers built onto the back of the Palazzo Ducale in the Renaissance offer a frontal gesture to anyone approaching from the southwest. This drawing is somewhat realistic, giving the texture, mass, and scale of the town as seen from afar, but it is not accurate in terms of detail. The number of buildings and their shapes and relationships with one another are approximate. Further, certain features are abstracted or exaggerated to

3-12



demonstrate their respective roles in the organization of the city.

A further abstraction singles out the important pieces, many of which were designed by the architect Francesco di Giorgio in the fifteenth century, and which still provide the principal organizing elements for the town. The Piazza della Repubblica acts as a hinge to the two sides of the town, located as it is in the saddle between the two hills. The arcade combined with the spiral ramp built by di Giorgio, connects the "front porch" with the main square in one way, and a special gate in the wall coupled with a street which sweeps unobstructed up the hill connects it in another way. The two churches help mark the center and the

Palazzo Ducale makes its gesture over the market square while the defensive walls surround it all, unifying many details and forms. This rather simple drawing distills essential qualities and parts, revealing how they work with one another.

3-13



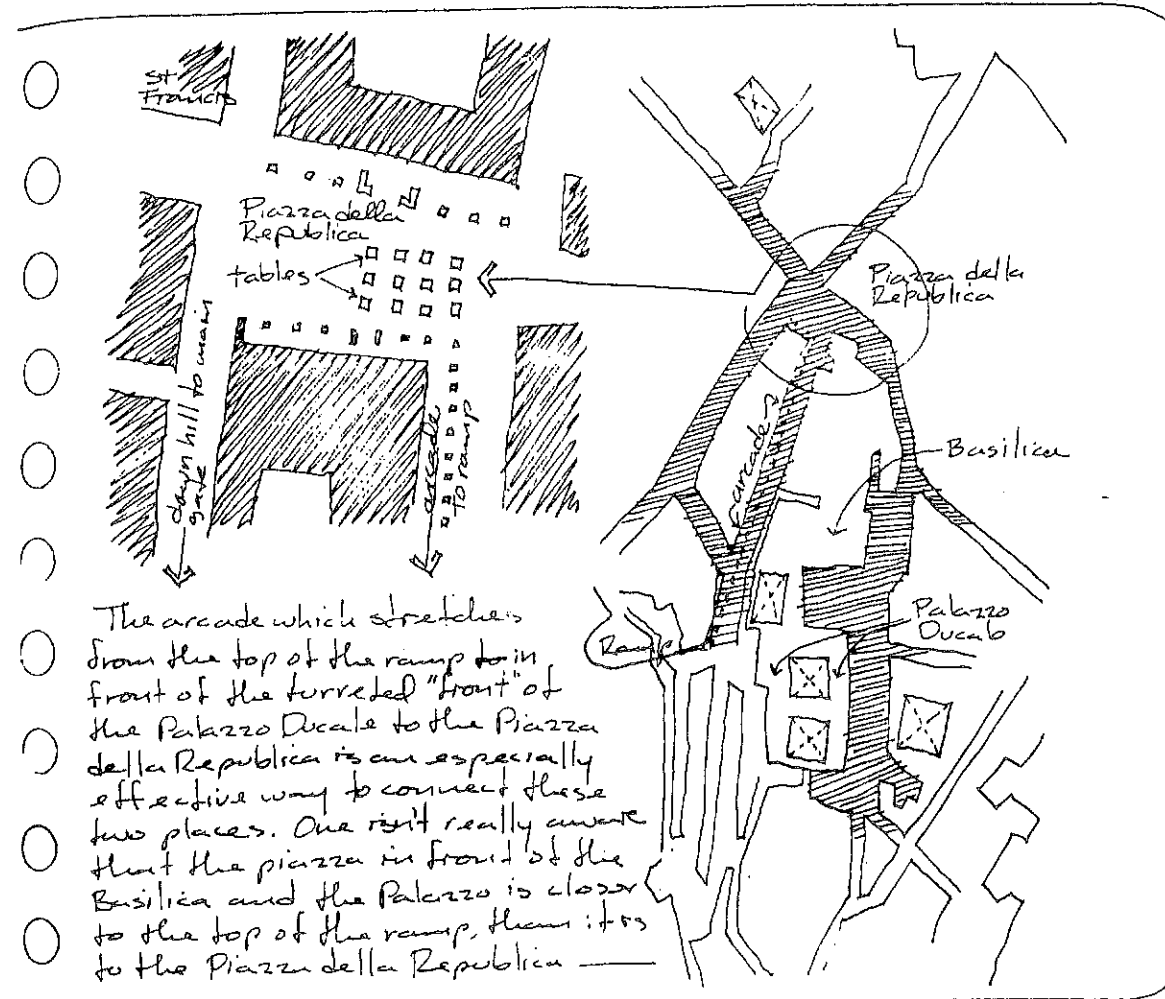
The next entries in the notebook came from an introductory walk through the town. This first walk around Urbino in the late afternoon light was intended to provide a general feel for the town, its internal organization, character from within, and impressions from its daily life. The verbal notes, sometimes in the form of exclamatory comments as above, record fresh impressions. Further notes regarding first impressions that afternoon record the setting for the town as seen from within, looking out. "The countryside is especially picturesque with countless little hills covered with a patchwork of crop fields, wood margins, vineyards and orchards. It reminds me of Grant Wood's paintings of Iowa, except here the fields are irregular in shape and the farm buildings are older, low brown

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brick structures with dusty red tile roofs. And, of course, the dotted patterns of vineyards punctuate the overall pattern."

The notes above record impressions concerning the town's organization as they are discovered. These verbal notes are concerned with the effect of the placement and use of various elements which condition the formal organization. Further notes, also verbal, which accompany the sketches, record something of the life of the town. "As evening comes on, the main square (Piazza della Repubblica) begins to fill with people, mostly students from the University. Tables and chairs appear to fill half the piazza. This is such a difference from when I first passed through the square three hours ago, with vehicles and people crisscrossed the piazza, seldom stopping."

3-14



"The larger square in front of the Cathedral (Metropolitana Basilica) and the Palazzo Ducale is now almost deserted. It is clear that the Piazza della Repubblica is the one place to be in the cool of early evening."

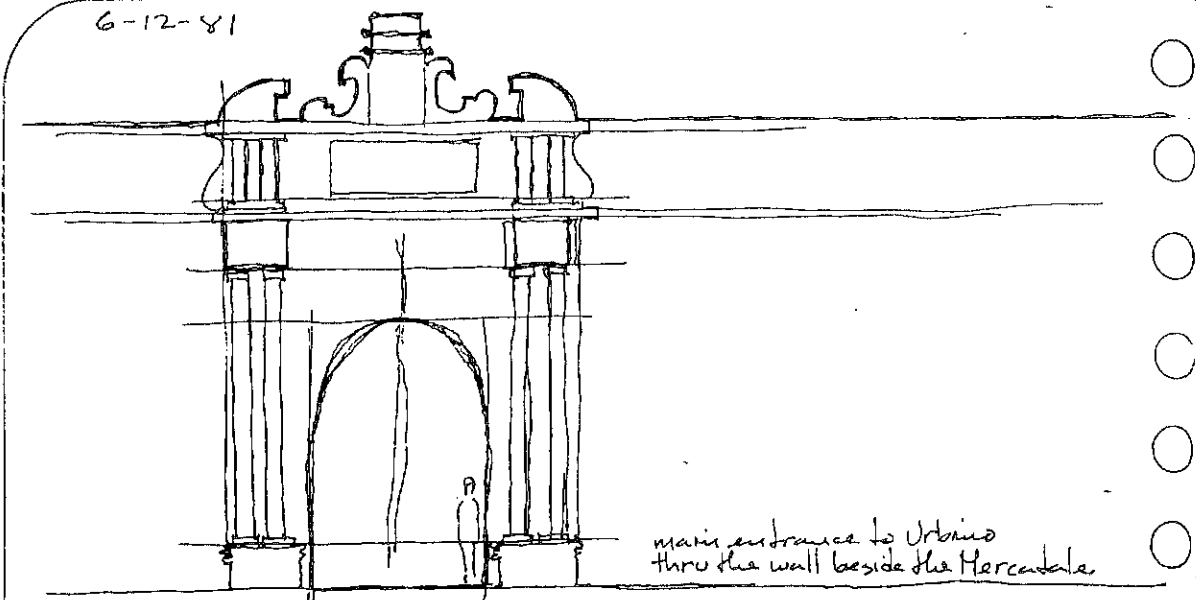
An early comment recorded in this initial tour of the town, that the town is built of brick, is valuable because it records an impression before the observer has become used to characteristics which first impress visitors. First impressions as well as studied observations are of value since first impressions are an integral part of the whole experience and, hence, an integral part of a comprehensive understanding of the qualities of "place." Subsequent comments such as the one about the main square changing character markedly from

the daytime to the evening are based on studied observations which required comparatively lengthy exposure to the town. Each of these observations—the first impression and the temporal observation—is equally important in conveying salient characteristics of the town.

The observation about the route from the top of the Ramp, along the arcaded street and through the main square to the square

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—because the "natural" sequence to get from the top of the ramp to the front of the Basilica is to go along the arcade to the Piazza della Repubblica then through the piazza and on up the hill to the Basilica. Because of the sequence, the Piazza della Repubblica remains fixed in one's mind as the main square of Urbino, even though it is considerably smaller than the other. (Of course that it is also at the joint between the two hills, and therefore central to the whole town.)

of the Basilica (beginning on the previous notebook page and continuing above) is important for a number of reasons, but most of all because this sequence of spaces and how they are traversed helps to form one's understanding of the town's basic order. It could be said, as the notebook drawings illustrate, that the primary ordering characteristics of Urbino are:

1. the unifying quality of ubiquitous brown-brick walls and dusty red tile roofs;
2. the two hills with the main square as a conjunctive element placed between them;
3. the old defensive walls which completely surround and unify the town by making it appear as a completed object in the landscape (rather than if it were to spread out and disappear into the landscape without apparent edges as do most North American towns);

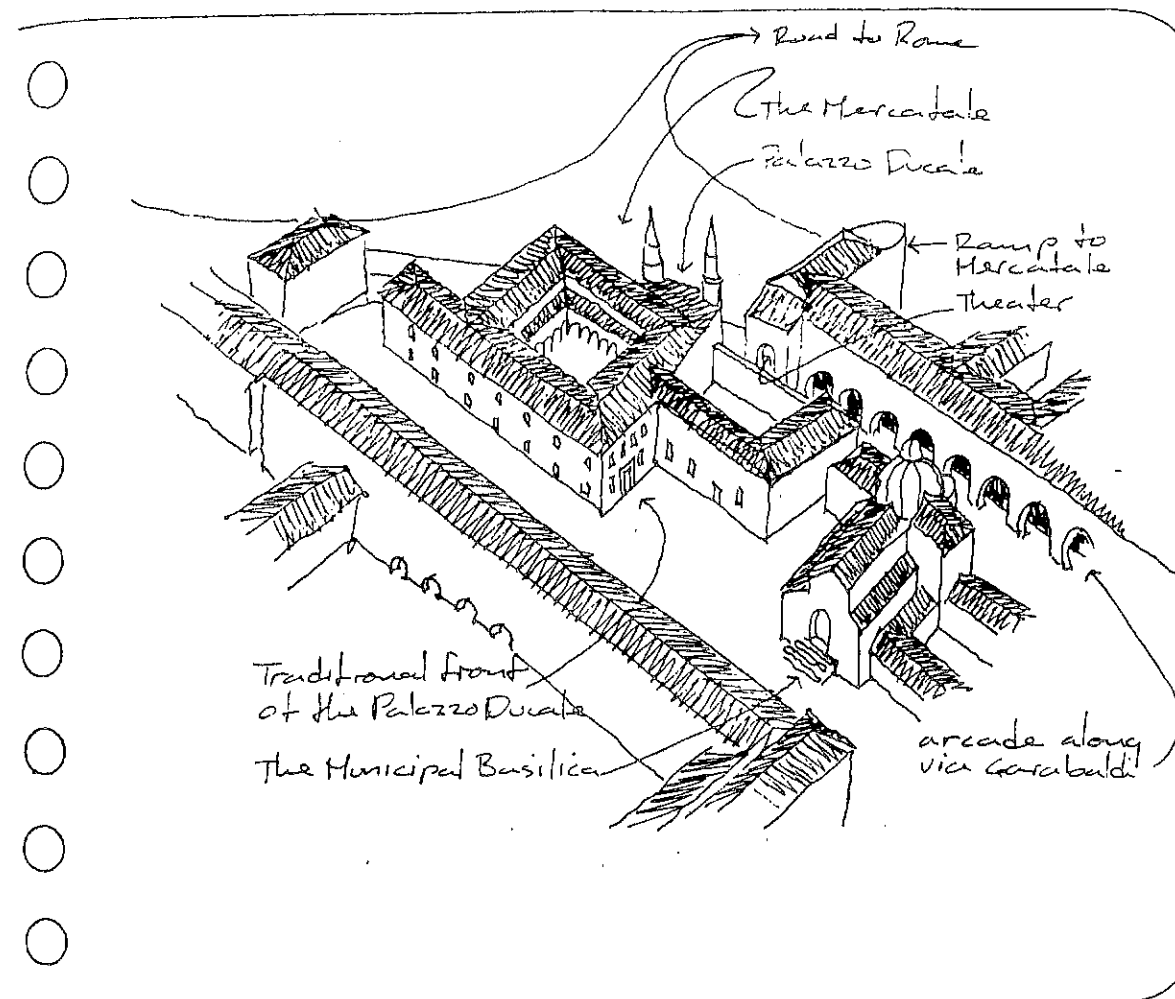
4. and finally there is this sequence of public spaces which link important places to one another in a coherent way.

The drawings which depict these ordering elements are particularly diagrammatic and nonpictorial in keeping with the conceptual nature of the ideas they represent.

These notes on Urbino were prompted by a certain attitude which conditioned the observations. One's approach to observations is usually guided by a predisposition toward the subject. This study of Urbino was made to gather notes which could be used in an article and to possibly inform an urban design scheme elsewhere. Preconceived notions of what is important and what is not might obscure valuable

Cooper, Douglas:  
 Drawing and Perception. Perspective Projection.  
 P. 158-169, P. 172-175

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observations which do not fit the mold. However, if you are to approach a scene as richly complex as a city as though you were "an empty cup awaiting fulfillment," chances are that you will wander aimlessly with relatively little reward. It is in the act of careful selection that discoveries are made. A scientist forms an hypothesis, then proceeds to test his hypothesis against realities in the form of experimentation. Like the scientist, we make observations and record them based upon "an hypothesis" as to what is of value to seek out and record. In the process of doing so we enhance our experience, begin to observe emerging patterns, and discover faults in our premises. The discovery of faulty premises begs rethinking in much the same way as a scientist readjusts his

hypothesis before returning to further experimentation. The act of effective observation involves a dialectic between premises and observations. That could be seen to encourage narrow-mindedness, but if you approach your exploration with a point of view, you will have the discipline of focused observation to rely upon, giving you the freedom to wander about without danger of losing the force of purpose.

We hope this account of a visit to Urbino demonstrates how keeping visual notes can sharpen the observer's sense of observation. Each experience of note-taking sharpens one's capacity for observation, permitting a deeper penetration into the richness of complex places.