

“Rethinking Architecture: From Structure to Experience”

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12:30 - 2:00 pm
Room 7-431

Arnold Berleant

Professor of Philosophy (Emeritus), Long Island University

Abstract:

How we understand and talk about architecture should emerge from our experience of architecture, but we don't have words that properly identify and describe that experience. Instead, we use a misleading vocabulary that reflects abstractions rather than sensible experience, words such as 'object (building, structure),' 'subject (viewer, feeling),' 'distance' (between viewer and object); and bifurcations such as viewer-object, objective-subjective, etc. All these in some way falsify perceptual experience. We need to develop an understanding that reflects sensible experience and a vocabulary that describes it more truly as perceptual; multi-sensory; active, not contemplative; continuous, not bifurcated; perceptually integrated; and participatory as aesthetic engagement. This transforms architecture from the art of building to the art of environmental experience, from the art of constructing objects to the art of shaping environmental experience.

Bio:

Arnold Berleant is Professor of Philosophy (Emeritus) at Long Island University (USA). His interests range over aesthetics, the arts, ethics, and social philosophy and he has lectured and written widely in these areas, both nationally and internationally. Berleant is the author of numerous articles as well as eight books on aesthetics, the arts, and the aesthetics of environment, including the aesthetics of architecture. His work has been translated into many languages. His most recent book, *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World*, appeared in 2010, and his new book, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts*, will be published in 2012. Berleant is also the founding editor of the on-line journal, *Contemporary Aesthetics*.

Sense perception lies at the etymological core of aesthetics (Gr. aisthesis, perception by the senses), and is central to aesthetic theory, aesthetic experience, and their applications. Berleant finds in the aesthetic a source, a sign, and a standard of human value. It is basic in the two areas in which he has mainly worked: philosophy, especially the philosophy of the arts and environmental aesthetics, and music.

Berleant's philosophical ideas develop out of a radical interpretation of experience influenced by the non-foundational naturalism of pragmatism and the undivided directness of existential phenomenology. In art and environment this leads to an emphasis on the engagement and continuity of active appreciation. In ethics it recognizes the provisionality and contextual character of value. In metaphysics it accepts the multiple realities and fluidity that come from the rejection of hierarchy. In social philosophy it stresses the formative power of cultural forces and the interpenetration and connectedness of community.