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The environment  
changes apace;  
its transformation  
has become a cultural  
obsession.

What do we need  
to make this frenetic  
change serve us well?

We need design that invests spirit in relationships that matter, planning that sets up viable futures for place and research that seeds new ground, traces the rhythms of inhabitation and can support our actions with confidence.

We need the ability to learn in many ways—through discoveries made while designing, through the study of both valued places and messed-up spaces, and through visions of opportunity. We need to make room for passion, juxtaposition, rigor and play, for the opinions of others and for experimentation. We need to be informed by disciplined observation and by calculations that reveal patterns not discernable in direct experience. All of these feed the creation of good places; none should be discounted.

We need the energy to see places whole. This takes special effort, because our immediate interests are always narrowly defined. Our responsibilities are delimited in order to make them manageable; our enthusiasms and ways of working follow familiar tracks and lend bias to our views. Although those with whom we work each have their own specific interests in mind, good places can evolve within a dynamic of mutual interference and support.

To endeavor to see places whole is not to assume that they should be uniform or subjected to a single controlling vision, or that they serve some deterministic purpose; it is to imagine that the places we inhabit should be full of life and buoyant with opportunity. Good places should engage our interests and bring them into a cohesion that is rewarding.

To seek consequence beyond the satisfaction of a professional assignment competently performed, or beyond the fulfillment of a personal ambition, requires the will to recognize that the interests of a larger polity (be it ever so silent, fragmented and confused) must be served by the cumulative result of our many disparate actions.

We need to make a concerted effort to peer through the mirage of unfolding opportunity that our economy has created, abetted by the doctors of fraudulent spin. We need to see beyond the foreground evidence of prosperity, to poke holes in the scrim and confront a larger world that is besieged. It is a world with suffering that will likely grow more (and natural resources that will certainly grow less), a world where tawdriness and cruelty infest large segments of our proudest cities and regions, and a world that desperately needs attention, generosity, knowledge and commitment. Billions of dollars in missile defense will not protect against the daily misery of neglect.

We need to take the spotlight off the scrim, light the ubiquitous surrounds and search there for purpose. In order to summon up the intelligence, the poetry and the driven determination that are necessary to bring life to places—and thus to make places suitable for the conduct of our lives—we must summon forth the best that our minds can think, our hearts can understand and our hands and machines can do. We need to foster effective guiding intelligence.

Places that we can identify and hold in our minds, places that embellish and enhance our lives, require being endowed with care and invested with imagination. The *EDRA/Places* awards program reported in this issue seeks to focus attention on developing patterns of thought, and to provide a context for the nurture of ideas and critiques that will lead, bit by bit and through the actions of many, towards a world of good and fitting places.

— *Donlyn Lyndon*