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## Patterns and Personality

One of the most precious things about good places is that they result from the energies of many people; they are not lonely feats of imagination. In experiencing and thinking about a place of any scope and substance you look in the windows of many minds and sense the pulse of diverse life stories.

Seldom, however, are places reported that way. The urge to construct a simple narrative usually leads to singling out a few individuals and attributing the charms (and faults) of the place to their invention.

Our attention turned to the new science complex at the University of Oregon because it is uncommonly ingenious in the intermingling of new buildings with existing structures, replete with elements of art and crafts not normally present in contemporary construction, intricately yet variously conceived as a place where work (scientific work, no less) is not set apart from personality.

We look at this place as the intersection of four traditions: the patterns and processes stemming from the work and writings of Christopher Alexander, as established in *The Oregon Experiment*; the design

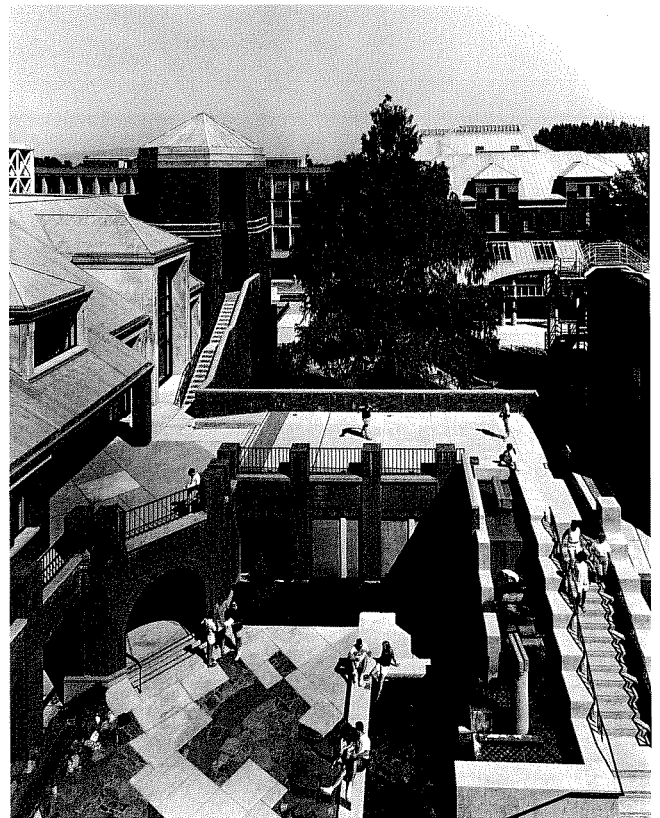
impulses and ways of working descendent from the insights and forms championed by Charles W. Moore, embodied here in the work of Moore, Ruble, Yudell and The Ratcliff Architects; and the tradition of alliance between the arts and architecture, implemented in this project through a competition for architecturally-integrated art; and the University's well-developed tradition of faculty self-governance.

Indeed, the richness of the science complex is that it was touched by the imaginations of many people, replete with thoughtful consideration and invention. Many faculty were involved in conceptualizing how these new buildings would structure their life; consequently, the place has an order that is richly interwoven. Making a careful evaluation of the site's relation to the larger campus led to a complex that maintains consistency with traditional campus patterns while accommodating and absorbing a previous set of buildings that broke from that pattern. Incorporating an art program during the design process brought to the place an additional layer of thought, providing its users with access to the pleasures of the muse. These initiatives now set in motion still another set of stories — ones that are acted out each day by the inhabitants of the place.

In this collection of articles, the largest picture is set by J. David Rowe, the University Planner. David was himself the embodiment of a quality without which no place of consequence can exist — quiet, caring persistence. In the course of a 17-year tenure at the University Planning Office, Rowe nurtured *The Oregon*

*Experiment* from its inception in Alexander's work into an effective working process for the University, a process that gives voice and form to the most fundamental human concerns for how places should enhance our lives. His unexpected death as this issue was being completed is a terrible loss.

— Donlyn Lyndon



**A courtyard and fountain  
in the University of Oregon  
science complex.**

**Photo by Timothy Hursley.**