THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER:
AN ARCHITECTURE OF PLACE, AUTHENTICITY, AND POSSIBILITIES,
BOWEN ISLAND, B. C.

by

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ABSTRACT

A contemporary view of health and health care has arisen, out of the broadened social understandings of the later half of this century, which recognizes the individual as a whole person (rather than a clinical object), and which recognizes the local community as the preferable locus of care. The community health center model has emerged as a response to this contemporary view. It is a community-specific model of health care delivery, health promotion, and community action. Its services cover a full range of primary health care needs (from social work to urgent care), utilizing a multi-disciplinary team approach. While the response of facility planning and programming to the contemporary view of health and health care has been explored to great depth over the past twenty five years, the response of architecture has not. The intent of this thesis was, therefore, to create an architectural design that may serve as a model of the multi-service community health center, and as a source of architectural ideas which respond to the contemporary view of health and health care. A rural site was selected as the most appropriate setting for a new purpose-built facility. The design solution specifically sought to countermand the alienation, stress, loss of sense of personal control, unfamiliarity, sterility, and institutional qualities of the common medical environment - particularly, from the experiential viewpoint of the client. The design also sought to stand on its own as a legitimate work of architecture. Towards these ends, the building was bound to the community via prominence, accessibility and familiarity in the activities of daily life. A concept of democratic space sought to extend the public realm and a sense of public ownership into the facility. A marketplace vocabulary and community-controlled space contributed towards this end. The building was bound to place via architectural expression and explorations of processional qualities: responding to the nature of its island place, to the forest environment, and to local vernacular architecture. The design sought to establish a relationship with nature, or natural order, via an interstitial relationship with the forest, the use of natural materials, a truthful structural expression, a presence of natural light, and, at the conceptual level, an interplay between order and aggregation. As a representation of health care architecture, the design sought to express the notion of a community of services, rather than that of an untouchable institution. It also sought to achieve all of this in accord with efficient functioning and way-finding, and to achieve it at costs comparable to existing facilities (if not less expensive), via strategic choices regarding systems and construction.
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context analysis

Concept: Context Analysis
circulation
democratic space

Concept: Circulation
functions

the institution as a gathering of people for common purpose
...as a village of amenities

Concept: Functions
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4 consulting reception

2 main entry and arcade

5 central waiting hall porch

3 central waiting hall

6 consulting room

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