



Architectural Education Explores the Everyday Living Environment

Mervi Eskelinen

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Children's Cultural Centre

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Abstract

The everyday living environment is often taken for granted, as it is constantly present. Often lacking surprises, there is usually little need to pay attention to it – it's too close for us to appreciate its true value. The starting point of architectural education of Lastu The School of Architectural and Environmental Culture is to promote understanding of our everyday living environment. It is important to explore and become familiar with our surroundings, and to develop our sensitivity to its various aspects. This promotes continuous interest in our environment and in architecture.

Keywords: architectural education, environmental culture

The conception of architecture underlying Lastu The School of Architectural and Environmental Culture pedagogical approach is broad and has been under construction in Lastu for more than twenty years. The architectural and environmental culture education we provide focuses on the entire man-made environment and addresses the cultural, social, economic, ethical, and aesthetic environment. In addition to buildings, the examination is extended to many other elements of the world around us, including the arts and human environmental activities. The viewpoints and approaches we draw upon include cultural history, local history themes, and cultural heritage. The strong bond between architecture and humans guides our pedagogy, emphasizing knowledge of our roots and home region, and the ways in which and reasons why the environment has taken its current form. The architectural realizations and experiences promoted by architectural education help in coming to terms with the broad array of values that constitute our lives and surroundings, thereby strengthening each student's personal relationship with architecture. Such a relationship removes the feeling of rootlessness and separation, and promotes care for the environment and active and responsible participation in its development.

The participants' own home or school is an excellent research subject in the everyday living environment. (Photo next page by LASTU/ Mervi Eskelinen)





The environment is a feast for all the senses. Getting to know the log corner by climbing or touching. (photo by Mervi Eskelinen)

In Lastu's architectural education, the environment is defined through human experience. Therefore, buildings and trees constitute an environment only when there is a person present to experience them. The environment covers both architecture and the natural environment, and the concepts of the natural, built, and cultural environments. On the other hand, the environment consists of various levels that are experienced by humans, including physical, psychological, social, experimental, functional, and cultural levels.

In Lastu we view that human existence in practically any part of the world would be very limited without the protection provided by architecture. It is part of our living environment in the form of buildings, roads, bridges, items, parks, gardens, and humans. We modify, shape, and build the environment but also live, feel, experience, and sense it; all these perceptions together constitute architecture. Architecture is influenced simultaneously by aesthetic, operational, technical, mental, social, societal, and cultural dimensions. Architecture encompasses all of these aspects. Pristine natural environments (which in any case are becoming increasingly rare) are therefore excluded from this definition of architecture.

We also think that a positive, pleasant environment supports human wellbeing and enables everyone to realize their personal lifestyle and individual existence. Humans do not exist

within architecture or in the environment, but are instead part of both of these phenomena. The architectural education of Lastu is based on idea that understanding architecture is a civic skill. Therefore, we are all responsible for the quality and diversity of architecture and for ensuring that it supports the life of each person. Architecture, the environment, and architectural education are all very important parts of human life.



Scale models of the participants' own homes can be used to examine the city or village structure. (photo by Mervi Eskelinen)

Lastu's approach to teaching

The aim of Lastu's architectural education is to encourage attention to one's everyday habitat. Architectural education explores the various interesting aspects of the environment and architecture. Participants will learn to examine their everyday living environment from a wide range of perspectives and employing all the senses. They will develop surprising discoveries, learn to notice details and special characteristics of the environment, and see beauty in refreshingly new places. They will also identify things to be improved, modified, or changed. At the same time, participants learn to care for the environment. The everyday living environment will become more familiar and more valued.

The various aspects of architecture will be discovered through immersion in the architectural world, through playful exploration, and by listening to and telling stories about architecture. Architectural education strengthens the relationship of humans with their cultural environment on the levels of intellect, competence, experiences, and intuition. Experiencing architecture involves both emotional and intellectual dimensions, and the education should develop them both.

Once we learn to appreciate our habitat, it is easy to extend our study and care to less familiar and less everyday areas and environments. Once awakened, this interest in one's surroundings will last for the lifetime. Therefore, architectural education is continually eye-opening, nurturing curiosity and

awareness of the environment, its various nuances and development, and the interaction between humans and architecture.

Architectural education consists of a wide range of themes and viewpoints for examination and study. The participants will receive in-depth knowledge of architecture from various viewpoints. Our environment is not just one story, but several.

The students of Pyörö school in Kuopio preparing their proposal for improving the environment. What could be done to make a familiar street more pleasant? (photo by Mervi Eskelinen)





The participants can prepare a game of their own home region based on examination of the various elements and layers of the built environment (maps, local detailed plan, building heritage, cultural history).

Photo by Mervi Eskelinen

Architectural education offered in practice in Lastu

The architectural education provided by Lastu covers many genres and is in many senses holistic. In the Lastu approach, togetherness is emphasized through architectural, art, and environmental culture education. The environment is approached from various viewpoints and by experimenting with and combining various art forms. Children and youth are encouraged to observe and sense their own living environment and to express themselves. Architectural education gives them new viewpoints on their own environment, strengthens their connection to their home area, and enhances their sensitivity to valuable features in their everyday living environment.

Lastu produces and organizes diverse, multi-genre and multi-disciplinary architectural education that takes the goals of sustainable development into account for children and young people, families, adults working with children and young people, and citizens, constructors, and professionals in the construction sector who care about their environment. Lastu offers basic training in architecture, workshops, camps, clubs, training projects, trainings, exhibitions, events, and loan materials. Lastu strongly believes in bringing these activities close to the participants both in the city and in rural areas. Workshops and activities are taken to schools, daycare centers, local libraries, and local events in the everyday living environment of the participants. Overall, architectural education is promoted through many training and education activities by offering information, materials, and methods.



Examining one's surroundings. Material can be collected for later use during a field trip, for instance with photographs and measurements, or by writing and drawing. (photo&photo mittaus2 by Mervi Eskelinen)





Building of a hut teaches the participants the basics of architecture and building. The hut building day of the Kangaslammi school in Varkaus.

Photo by Mervi Eskelinen



A mill and its scale model. Architecture can be approached from different viewpoints. The function of buildings is just one of many possible topics for research.

REFERENCES

. Lastu, The School of Architectural and Environmental Culture
www.lastu.fi

Photo by Satu Ratinen