

Inner Tennis

an introductory course on architecture
2009/2026





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An Introduction to the Introduction

How do we involve ourselves as teachers and professors, how do we teach participation and engagement in this discipline? An engagement in what today: in social and cultural responsibility, in the politics of the environment, in the theatre of architecture or the theater of architectural imagery? Or even an engagement in that other insistent theatre, the theatre of war: in Helmand Province, in the North-West Frontier Provinces between Pakistan and Afghanistan, or in the latest outbreak of unrest in Africa?

If some of you, as you enter architecture, think you have no inner logic, no reference world you can hold onto, no cultural repertoire worth talking about, no political position to take, no attitude to fall back on, or if some of you do not quite understand what it might mean to talk of a 'critical self', you will not be alone.

It is tempting to think, by coming here, by listening to me present ten lectures, by listening to me ask for an openness in your learning and to be prepared to make mistakes in front of you, that you can forget the random, the arbitrary nature of life, the chance event, or even the coincidences which will make from you perhaps one day, an architect.

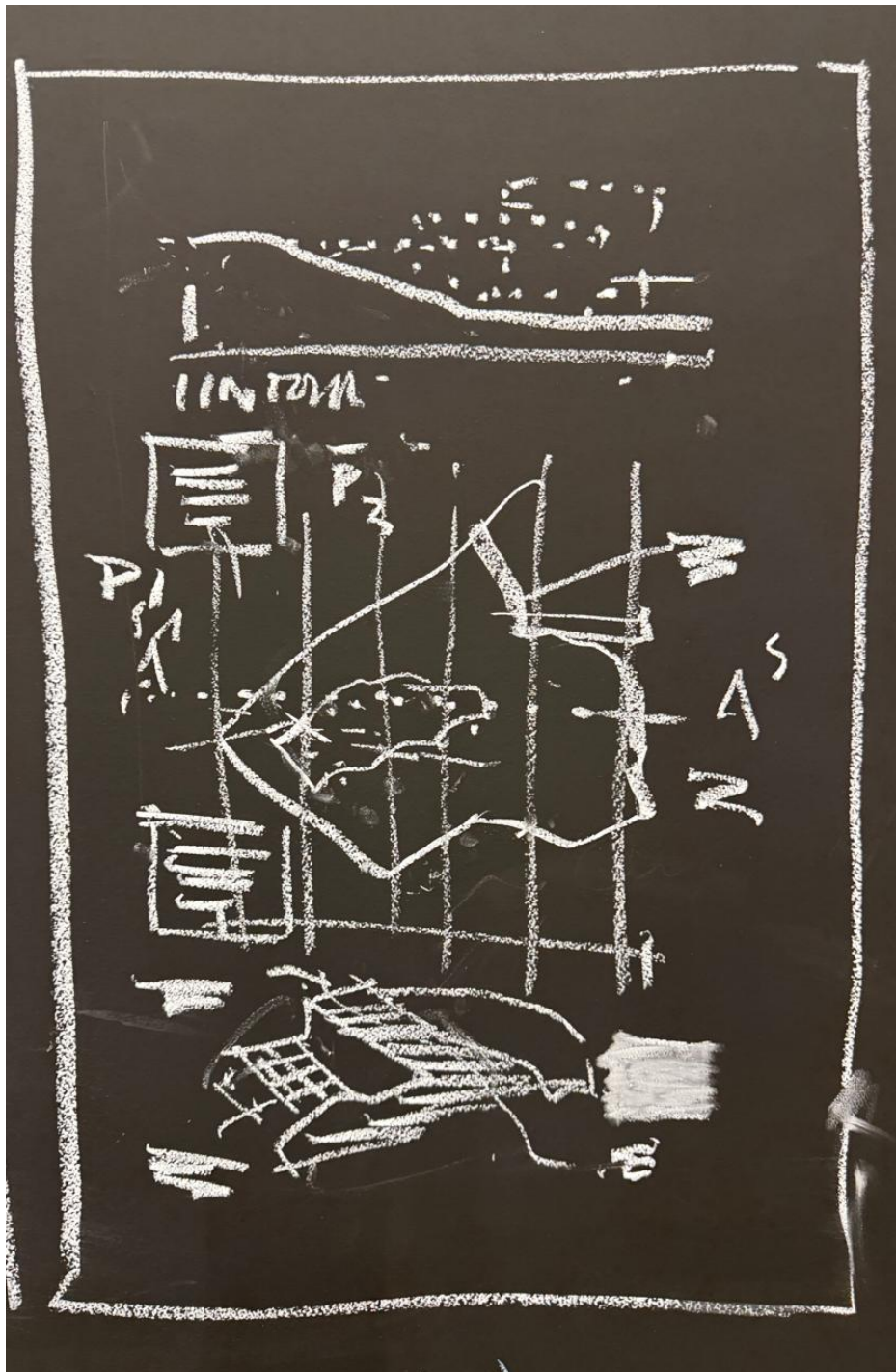
Well, I have some news for you. You can never forget these. You can never forget the random, the arbitrary, the chance event and the coincidence. They will follow you as you begin to learn more about this discipline we still call, at present, *architecture*.

These concerns will not go away despite the amount of instruction and navigation you begin to learn, despite however much you wish to see grades achieved in high school turn into a solid structure and achieve grades in architecture school. There is often no relation between the two except the word 'structure' which of course can provide insight into solidity as much as it can provide insight into chance, volatility and the random event.

The lists, indices, exercises, glossaries, anecdotes, short text messages, words, haikus, notions, concepts and ideas that I will share with you in this course (some of which are reproduced in this incomplete sketchbook) are not exercises in any conventional sense of the word. Instead, they are exercises to exercise learning and thinking. In fact, there is nothing conventional or normative about these exercises; they have no precedent, no history to fall back on except that they rely on your own desire to situate yourself in what you might be learning every day of your life from here onwards.

There is no exam as such, only self-discipline. And if you navigate well these introductions with an open mind, a diverging mind rather than a converging one; if you manage to do this without hurried cynicism and hypocrisy you will have no trouble. A few apparently random paired words might help you to start. Navigation and mapping, concentration and contest, resistance and seduction, flow and anti-flow, accuracies not truths, strategies and collaborations.

I can this *inner tennis*. It is by keeping this in mind as you are introduced to things that also introduce you to architecture, you will remain in control of your own education. If you do this, you will also remain in control of your own story. And by so doing, you may retain an enthusiasm to participate in change in the future. It's your choice, your call!





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(Roger Connah 2009/2026)