

- 2) A tendency to touch or rub the eyes.
- 3) An expressed dislike for reading.
- 4) A tendency to avoid close work of any kind.
- 5) Dislike for parlor games.
- 6) Inability to concentrate the attention on any subject far more than a short time.
- 7) Excessive daydreaming, or looking off into space.
- 8) A tendency to tilt or turn the head.
- 9) Contortion of the face into a frown while reading or writing.
- 10) A tendency to keep one eye closed.
- 11) Frequent loss of place while reading.
- 12) Reading with the face very close to the page.
- 13) Movement of the head while reading.
- 14) Poor eye-hand coordination in sports or other physical activities.
- 15) Fatigue, nervousness, irritability, or restlessness following the completion of tasks which involve use of the eyes.
- 16) Difficulty in remembering what is read.
- 17) Confusion of similar words.
- 18) Using the finger to lead the eye while reading.

A complete eye examination, carried out by a highly trained professional, is the only certain way to find out whether a child (or an adult) has an eye difficulty. A high percentage of American children who are in the "bottom third" of their classes scholastically are suffering from some kind of vision defect. The percentage is smaller for high scholastic achievers, but many children

who are "doing quite well" would be achieving at even higher levels if their vision were better.

The Better Vision Institute believes that all children should be examined thoroughly for good vision before they enter school. To promote the cause of better vision, especially for the young, the Institute offers free to all women's organizations a kit that tells how to alert people in the community to the importance of good vision. The kit includes an informative speech about good vision and how the eye works, a set of information-packed pamphlets, and a number of specific suggestions about how to conduct a productive better vision program. It can be obtained by writing to the Better Vision Institute, 230 Park Avenue, New York City, N.Y. 10017.

An estimated 13-million school children – and millions of adults – now need vision help of one kind or another, and it is a tragic fact that many will never receive it. Is your child seeing efficiently? A child who can't make both eyes focus as a team is handicapped because he will never get a true in-depth picture of the world. A child who has uncorrected "tunnel vision" may never learn to read fast enough to succeed in school. A child with poor eye-hand coordination may need a prescribed course of eye-training exercises. Yet each of these children may have "20-20 vision" in the commonly accepted sense of the term. Wise parents can probably influence their children's future in no more forceful manner than by making sure that their eyes are in efficient working order.

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## THE UNIVERSITY AS A VISUAL EXPERIENCE

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One of the regrettable consequences of technological progress and urbanization has been a loss of perspective – both literally and figuratively. In a time when there is a great deal of discussion of socially "deprived" or "under-privileged" groups in society, it seems appropriate to consider the visual "deprivation" to which all of us appear to have fallen victim. It is the purpose of this brief essay to point out some of the elements of our environment which have led to this state, the role of the university in this process, and some possible, if highly speculative, remedies.

The most obvious loss of vision is due to the automobile. The restricted view which we have of our immediate environment, both due to the necessity of keeping our eyes on the road, as well as the physical obstacles posed by the car body, produce a tunnel vision which eliminates us from visual contact with our immediate surroundings, in particular the higher portions thereof. Thus trees are viewed as trunks, streets as

channels, people as peripheral, even dangerous diversions. Attention is mainly focused on the operation of mechanisms.

If we consider the elimination of the pedestrian view entirely, then it becomes clear that attractive vistas, meaningful articulations of mass and space, good architecture, parks, etc. become irrelevant.

The significant elements are parking garages, parking meters and spaces, driveup banks, post offices, food chains, gas pumps, traffic lights, asphalt concrete, and neon signs.

In this curtailment of vision, which seems all too natural and logical, we lose the sense of identity, the sense of place (topophilia) which has long characterized civilization, for the elements of our environment as just described, are totally devoid of individual character. Let us consider the process in more detail. Without an opportunity for the human eye to focus on such details as "hard" and "soft" masses (i.e. buildings and

vegetation), the relationship of these to one another, the texture of surfaces of buildings, it is easy to see how the present urban jumble can arise. Facades are presented, in the best Hollywood tradition, since the real thing does not matter. Cosmetics apply equally well to buildings and the human face.

What role does, and can, the university play in reawakening the function of our eyes? At present, most universities faithfully reflect their environment. The primary aesthetic determinants are cost, politics, and the availability of local architects and planners. Most universities, Oakland included of course, appear to have no indigenous resources for the planning of a meaningful and aesthetic environment. Consequently the architecture, if this word indeed has any meaning, can be simply characterized as "institutional." It does not matter whether the inhabitants are factory workers, mental patients, secondary or college students. Minor modifications in the interiors are adequate to serve all.

Look at your own campus. All native shrubs have been removed to make the mowing of the lawn easier. Paths are laid out to limit movement to repetitive paths (Why do students walk on the grass?). Color accent is carefully avoided. Halls are bare and long. Lounge areas are designed on a gargantuan scale, the furniture is aseptically modern. Buildings are scattered on a very attractive site in such a way as to minimize topographical attractions. The major criterion is — travel time between units.

What can be done to improve the visual aspects of the university? It would appear that this question does not need justification. And yet there are many who would oppose the use of university resources for non-instructional improvements. Insofar as the university exists to examine and reflect on both man and his creations, it would appear that an improvement of our university setting might have a strong influence on the future outlook of its graduates. I offer the following suggestions, some admittedly open to debate.

The campus should be considered as a park, carefully planned by the addition of shrubs, trees, and bushes to provide a variety of enclosed spaces where privacy alternates with public promenades. An effort should be made to conceal those buildings which are presently

extant and unattractive. This can be done by diverting the eye to more interesting views. Pathways should be provided in variety, utilizing bricks, stones, woodchips, and other media to provide variety, instead of the inevitable sterile concrete or asphalt. The paths should be lined, at suitable intervals, with sculpture in a variety of media. This should expressly not be copies of "famous" works such as Rodin's "Thinker," but rather the native product of budding campus artisans and artists. In a similar manner, the university should encourage, by purchase and otherwise, the decoration of hallways and rooms, with materials selected from various media. Within each building there should be small areas set aside, like wayside chapels, for meditation and rest. These should reflect the current desires of students and faculty in their decoration, rather than the sterile productions of an industrial "interior decorator." The emphasis in this planning, as in all planning, should be on the individual, rather than on mass accommodations. Therefore dining areas should be screened and partitioned into individual chambers, rather than the present infinite expanses. The use of artificial flowers and shrubs inside buildings is particularly to be condemned in a university, where the real ought to be distinct from the facade. Periodic changes in all the interior portions of the environment should be discussed and implemented on a regular basis throughout the year, giving students and faculty alike an opportunity to develop their visual sense. The use of fountains, lights, and flags is pointed out. There should be throughout a favorable and positive impression made on the viewer, be he student, faculty, or visitor, as he moves through the various "micro-environments" which such an arrangement would offer. This may provide a future interest and involvement for the student, which will carry over into the community of which he will someday be a part. It will stimulate him to discover the possibilities inherent in this, and any other environment. Most importantly, it will teach him to respect the ever shrinking space which is allotted to each human being, and encourage him to seek its fullest use.

It is said that man uses only half his brain. It appears entirely possible that we are, in terms of our immediate environment, technically blind.

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## POSITIONS WANTED

(Credentials on file with editor of Journal)  
Ph. D. Graduate, 1971, University of Minnesota;  
Interested in Teaching Position in a Technical College

Ph. D. Graduate, 1969, University of Tennessee;  
Interested in Teaching Animal Husbandry and Related Areas