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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Love.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh ... an exceptional man, a religious leader of world renown, a Master of Masters in the art of living.

I am an architect, having been registered in the Province of British Columbia, with six years of university education (B.Sc. University of Western Ontario 1970, B.Arch. University of British Columbia 1973) and eight years' of architectural work experience. I am writing in support of the visa application of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh to remain in the United States, as a person of exceptional ability in the Arts and Sciences, a true meeting of the creative and the practical. Rajneeshpuram, the community inspired by Bhagwan, is a dramatic illustration of how an exceptional man can influence the process of development of the townscape of America.

As a student of architecture in the early 1970's, I became enthralled by this question of process; process not product. Architecture as process not product. So much of the built environment around us, sometimes intriguing, sometimes monumental, but more often than not cold, sterile, lacking life. What motivation behind this production? What input do the future users have in the process of production? A study of multiple housing across Canada vividly demonstrated the lack of care of both the providers and the provided for. Architects and planners who would never dream of occupying their own creations, but satisfied that another successful high-rise had been completed and the money in the bank. Personal gain, success, the motivating force. Users, with buildings in sad disrepair after only two years of use, slums in the making, a stepping stone only to the dream of owning the single family home on the acre lot. Liveability became the keyword, the catchphrase for myself and many of my peers. How to produce liveable environments; cities, towns, neighbourhoods, developments, where people were the main concern. In Athens, my last year of study, I looked for an answer. Perhaps the indigenous, the vernacular, would hold the key. Architecture without architects. The life inherent in the natural organic growth of the ancient villages, particularly in the islands. But can such environments exist or develop side by side with a modern technological society?

My thesis "Community in search of home" was a test. Working with 20 families in the City of Vancouver trying to locate and build a

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co-operative housing project. Twenty homes on a one acre lot. A stepping stone. Five years from initial conception to final construction with the users involved in the process through each painstaking step. The architect a part of the whole, both designer and designed for along with the rest of the users. The architect living as a part of this small community. Much of my work since graduation has occurred in this field; designing housing and community facilities with the user as a major source of input in the design process. Perhaps one of the most exciting projects was the competition for the Burke Mountain new town, near Vancouver, British Columbia. A town to house 20,000 people. We were an inter-disciplinary team involving some of the best professionals in their fields at the time. Chris Alexander, creator and master of the pattern language approach to user participation. Ian McHarg, whose books are the backbone of the environmental technologies and the most sophisticated computerized environmental analysis techniques to back us up. The program, the design by all accounts was a great success ... it never got built. Changing political pressures and the whole thing fizzled.

This is the dilemma; a small group of people, twenty at most in my experience, can achieve the level of participation to actualize a liveable environment for themselves, but beyond this impossible. At the neighbourhood or town scale, traditional planning techniques cannot cope with the user, the typical result being a few well-intentioned professionals playing magician with the lives of many users who have been relegated to the role of statistics long before they ever even enter into the environment that has been built for them. The future residents do of course have the option of not buying into the project when it is completed (that is, of course, if there really is a viable alternative). At any rate, someone eventually moves into the environment to accommodate their lives to the designs made by the prima donna architects, planners and entrepreneurs, sometimes years before.

Until I visited Rajneeshpuram just over a year ago, the occasion the First Annual World Celebration, I had not found a solution to this dilemma. Now after several visits, including a three month stay, I am convinced that there is something happening in this new town in the desert that completely alters the current state of the art of producing liveable environments.

At Rajneeshpuram the process has changed. The architects, the planners, are not isolated from the community they serve. They are an integral part of a truly inter-disciplinary team that includes engineers, psychologists, sociologists, cement mixers, carpenters, lawyers, farmers, doctors, cleaners, horse tenders

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and pot washers. They are part and parcel of the whole. There is no separation between the professionals and the so-called non-professionals. In fact, the whole concept of a professional has been completely revised. This is a community where doctors are driving buses, dentists are building greenhouses, contractors are watering gardens and architects are mashing potatoes as opportunities of enriching their experiences. There is a completely unilateral hierarchy; in fact no hierarchy exists. The boundaries are gone. There is no architect, there is no client. They are all one, and yet the professionalism in everything that has been accomplished is remarkable. And so the physical environment grows by itself, a shadow of the developing community. Every project is a fulfilment of a need expressed by the residents. As the needs change, the environment changes. Nothing is static. Buildings change uses as fast as the seasons, in an unpatterned flux. This is a living city, the residents the heart and Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh the heart beat.

This is the real magic of Rajneeshpuram. The silent presence and religious vision of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh have provided the inspiration for a truly organic liveable community; a community that pulses with life; a community where every resident is working for every other resident and all are working for the whole. In fact the concept of work has been re-defined. Work has become a worship, a meditation, a play. Through His presence His sannyasins are discovering the way to go in and the city is growing by itself in a perfect blend of the vernacular and the technological. This is the reality of a truly synergistic society that could only be thought about by the philosophers, scholars and architects of the 60s and 70s.

Rajneeshpuram, "The City of the Lord of the Full Moon", is His disciples' living temple, dedicated to Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. His presence nourishes it from within. This experiment of Rajneeshpuram is destined to become an example of international importance not only to the professional community of architects and planners but to the whole of humanity. At a time when world crisis is the order of the day, we can ill-afford to lose the opportunity of seeing this vision come to fruition.

Yours in trust



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