

Discussion in Progress: The Image of the Urban Environment

We assume that there are four levels of the organization of perception, here given in terms of the visual sense as an illustration:

1.) the visual field, the immediate image as recorded by the eye; bounded and finite, in perspective, shifting, instantaneous, etc.

2.) the visual world, the visual field reinterpreted in terms of everyday experience, stable, without perspective, of constant color and size, panoramic, an extended present.

3.) the schematic world, a generalized picture or image of a specific physical reality; abstract, independent of time and of the actual presence of the particular reality (although this must have been present to the eye at least once).

4.) the realm of stereotypes, also an abstract timeless image; now no longer referring to any specific reality, but rather to a class of them.

Our study limits itself to a consideration of the levels of the visual and schematic worlds, and particularly of the latter, since the city is typically vast and complex, and apprehended over time rather than in a brief interval. The schematic world is indeed a device used by the individual to cope with the overwhelming richness of the outside world. The schema, or more loosely the image, of the city and its parts which is formed by the observer, will be the basic theme of this discussion.