



Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science (MIT Press)

By Alberto Pérez-Gómez



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Architecture remains in crisis, its social relevance lost between the two poles of formal innovation and technical sustainability. In *Attunement*, Alberto Pérez-Gómez calls for an architecture that can enhance our human values and capacities, an architecture that is connected -- attuned -- to its location and its inhabitants. Architecture, Pérez-Gómez explains, operates as a communicative setting for societies; its beauty and its meaning lie in its connection to human health and self-understanding.

Our physical places are of utmost importance for our well-being. Drawing on recent work in embodied cognition, Pérez-Gómez argues that the environment, including the built environment, matters not only as a material ecology but because it is nothing less than a constituent part of our consciousness. To be fully self-aware, we need an external environment replete with meanings and emotions.

Pérez-Gómez views architecture through the lens of mood and atmosphere, linking these ideas to the key German concept of *Stimmung* -- attunement -- and its roots in Pythagorean harmony and Vitruvian temperance or proportion. He considers the primacy of place over space; the linguistic aspect of architecture -- the voices of architecture and the voice of the architect; architecture as a multisensory (not pictorial) experience, with Piranesi, Ledoux, and Hejduk as examples of metaphorical modeling; and how *Stimmung* might be put to work today to realize the contemporary possibilities of attunement.

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Editorial Review

Review

Situating the contemporary discussion of mood and atmosphere against its historical and philosophical background, Pérez-Gómez's *Attunement* offers a critique of current architectural theorizing at the same time as it also argues for an 'atmospheric' architecture that is predicated on the essentially 'placed' character of human being. *Attunement* will be essential reading not only for architects, but for all interested in place, atmosphere, and the human relation to the world.

(Jeff Malpas, Distinguished Professor, University of Tasmania; author of *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place*)

A real *tour de force*, this is the work of an intellectual craftsman in full possession of the materials and tools of his trade: a broad sweep of historical material, from the present day to remote antiquity, and then back again, sized and shaped with the precision instruments of his art: philology, philosophical hermeneutics, and poetic reformulation. The workplace is contemporary culture; his task, nothing less than reshaping the way architecture is understood today. Architecture is shown to endow experience with *attunements* that are equally material, spatial, and linguistic, apprehended by both the body and the mind, through emotions and ideas, providing us with the kind of architectural atmospheres we would not only love to inhabit but dream of designing. For that last purpose there will be no better guide than this book

(David Leatherbarrow, Professor of Architecture, University of Pennsylvania)

Driven by a critique of the reductive perspective of modern science, Alberto Pérez-Gómez explores in this book an essential task of architecture: to offer attunement between human beings and their environment. As an antidote to Cartesian dualism, the book is a true act of bringing together: while it pairs historical depth with today's concerns, it discusses the interactivity of body and mind, recognizing embodiment and language as crucial aspects of architectural perception. His consideration of poetic language as crucial tool in understanding and designing attuned atmospheres offers a necessary correction to the limitations of prevailing methods of architectural production and representation.

(Klaske Havik, Associate Professor of Architecture, Delft University of Technology; author of *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture* and editor of *OASE Journal for Architecture*)

About the Author

Alberto Pérez Gómez directs the History and Theory of Architecture Program at McGill University, where he is Saidye Rosner Bronfman Professor of the History of Architecture. He is the author of *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics* (both published by the MIT Press), and other books.

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