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Dennis Wedlick's Approach To The Discipline Of Architecture And The Creative Process

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Ok, Lois, so you interviewed yourself in *The Huffington Post* once before and explained that you did so because you were trying to understand your own engagement with the work of Edmund White. Why again?

The answer was easy the first time; it's even easier this time! Because I want to articulate why, knowing as little as I do about architecture, I would want to interview an architect as I will be doing on February 8th at [New York Psychoanalytic Society & Institute](#). In the "Conversations with..." series, I speak with writers, painters, choreographers, playwrights.... And I do know whereof I speak in conversing with them. But an architect?



Is there a bit of dilettantism in this?

No, I think not. As an academic, I have the privilege of life-long learning: Teaching and writing are both learning forums. (I am reminded here of D.W. Winnicott's dedication of his celebrated book *Playing and Reality*: "To my patients who have paid to teach me.") Doing these interviews, whether with people who are creative in areas I know something about or with individuals who work in areas of which I know very little, is an extension of that. A dilettante has no knowledge of the area in question and professes an interest that lacks commitment. I take great pleasure in immersing myself -- and I do submerge myself deeply -- in the creative output of those I interview.

In this instance, there is also something else: I met [Dennis Wedlick](#) on one occasion, when we were on a jury together at Princeton University reviewing the work of graduate students in landscape architecture, invited by instructor Margie Ruddick. I was so impressed both with what he had to say about design and how he said it that I knew right then and there I wanted to invite him.

If you know so little about architecture (to say nothing of landscape architecture!), whatever were you doing on such a jury?

Beats me... but it was a wonderful experience! Actually, Ruddick is known, as I discovered, for thinking outside the box and encouraging multi-disciplinary discussion.

So how do you propose to question a truly preeminent architect knowing, as you profess to, so little?

I am currently reading and re-reading the exceedingly accessible -- by which I mean the exceedingly readable by the non-expert -- writings of Wedlick. I am pouring through mountains of slides (wishing, of course, that each design belonged to me!). More important than the deep affinity I feel with his work, and my appreciation of its aesthetic value, is my interest in *how* he works. I have been totally taken in by his way of working with his clients as he describes it. He has a very unique way of designing that works in every sense of the word: His designs work aesthetically, functionally, and environmentally. But it is *how* he gets there -- and the role played by the client (or clients) in that process -- that fascinates me.

What else intrigues you besides Wedlick's creative process?

In one of his several books, Wedlick wrote, "Birds have successfully tended to their families in good homes for thousands of years. If they can do it, why can't we?" What else intrigues me? His notion of what constitutes a "good home."

I am also interested in how he determines what will be emotionally engaging in what he designs, how he arrives at the emotional connection of which he writes and what he means by it, for clearly he places a premium on that. Wedlick's Hudson Passive Project, which he completed in 2011, was the first certified passive house in New York State. Conceptually and

visually, it is very powerful. How to design and how to build with the preservation of our natural resources as the primary focus is vitally important. I'm very eager to hear Wedlick talk about this. His firm subsequently created a newspaper called *The Greater Good Home Paper*. I am eager to hear what he feels we can all be doing on an everyday basis to support green objectives and also his plans for the future in this area of architectural design.

What has this to do with psychoanalysis?

The creative process has everything to do with the psyche and psychic function. Architecture has to do with the utilization of space. What does working with space and constructing in space mean for Wedlick? What does creating "homes" for others mean to him? Why did he choose architecture? Such questions are endless...

The Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer claimed, "The ultimate task of the architect is to dream. Otherwise nothing happens." In fact, the process of architectural design has been compared by a number of psychoanalysts to dreaming. It will be interesting to see whether anything about the states of consciousness involved in dreaming and their relation to the states of consciousness involved in creativity and problem solving resonates with Wedlick.

And don't forget that the analytic process itself is a construction, as is the way meaning is bestowed by each of us on everything we experience.

