Architecture and Biophilia

Creating Spaces that Promote a Positive Affiliation with Nature and the Living World

What seems important about fishing and berry picking and rice harvesting is that you're out there. And when you're out there, so many other good things happen that you never predict. You see the loons dance and hear the whitethroats sing and watch the goldeneyes raise their young. You get dirt in your food and listen to the noises in the night and feel small again. And that's good.

It's good because it reminds you where the real world is and what it's made of. It's water and wind and wonder, not the electrical box that glows blue and orange in the corner of your living room. It's the feel of a Duluth pack riding soft against your back, not whether you squeeze through the next intersection before the light turns red. It's the first smell of smoke from the breakfast fire, not some matrix of lightbulbs beaming the time and temperature at you. And that's what counts - the little things.

If I can hold out another week or so, I'll make it. That's when we're going north. As a 10-year-old kid on the dock of a Canadian ranger station on Saganaga Lake said one June day, "We're going to Canada." He said the word as if it were some wonderful, far-off land, a place he'd been dreaming about for years, a place he was finally going to get to see for himself. I feel almost the same way.

I'm ready - ready to get some of the city out of my veins.

- from "Urban Relief" by Sam Cook



Biophilia

What is this "itch" we get in the springtime to go fishing, or in the fall to go hunting, or any time of the year, to be outdoors and interact with nature?

It's biophilia.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author and biologist, Edward O. Wilson, first coined the term "biophilia" in 1984, in his book entitled with the term. In his general hypothesis, he concluded that "humans are attracted to other living organisms and that this contact with the natural world may benefit health". He believes we as humans have a biological need to interact with nature.

How does biophilia relate to architecture?

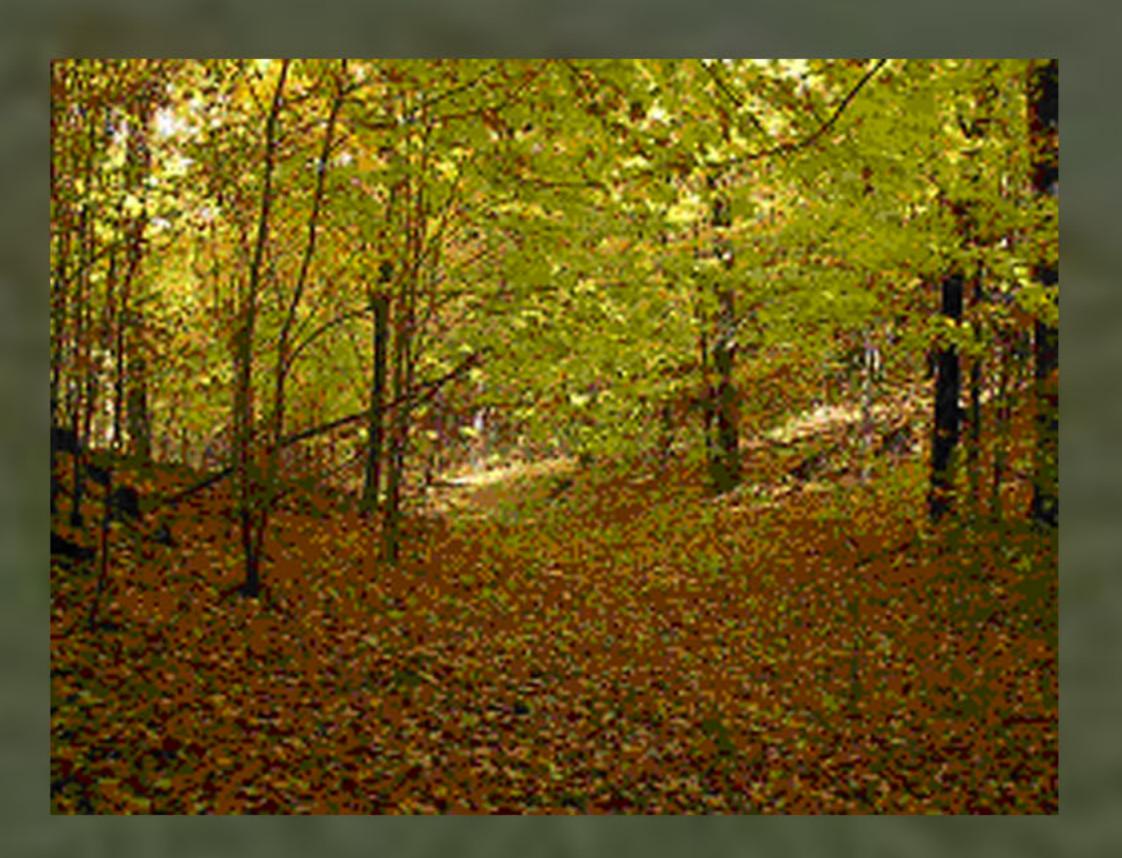
Combining biophilia with architecture means designing in such a way that allows people to have opportunities to interact with nature, whether it is being outdoors in a natural setting, or just having a view from the interior of a building.

There have been multiple studies done that prove human contact with nature is beneficial to human health and well-being, such as what views people have from their office windows and how it affects their stress levels, and stress levels among recovering medical patients who have views of trees vs. those who have a view of a brick wall. These studies and many more, conclude that "people with access to nearby natural settings have been found to be healthier than other individuals. The longer term, indirect impacts also include increased levels of satisfaction with one's home, one's job, and with life in general" (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989).

It involves using native plants and trees in the landscape, providing windows that frame views of the natural scenery and landscape, letting light and wind flow through the interior spaces. Essentially, it's bringing the outdoors to the indoors, to connect building users with the site and landscape.

Design Objectives

- * Create a connection between biophilia and design, and to promote a positive affiliation with nature through the design of a cabin resort
- * Promote a sense of simplicity and well-being for guests and staff, and give them opportunities to connect with nature
- * Built elements should be sustainable in their design by incorporating daylight, natural ventilation, energy efficiency, and the use of local and recycled materials
- * Buildings and landscape features should be placed on the site in a non-obtrusive manner, creating a dialogue with the site by appropriately responding to its conditions



Biophilia