SENSORY ARCHITECTURE
Redefining How One Interprets Space
Through the design of this addition to the
John G. Shedd Aquarium
Chicago, Illinois

How do combinations of our senses influence the way
we interact with our surrounding built environment?

Northern Facade
Plaza
Sub Level One
New Entry Interior
“places are specific, but their elements are general; we comprehend places through sensory data; our understanding of place is filtered through memory; and our delight in place is enhanced by a degree of mystery”

- Henry James
The complexity of the individual part is only understood against the coherence of the larger paradigm...it is the clarity of this relationship that grants legibility. And while mystery indeed gives delight, it is likely not critical to our understanding of spatial construct...

- Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka

Complexity: the intricacy of detail present in a specific location
Coherence: our sense of order, our knowledge of the larger environment

Figure/Ground Relationship

Contextual: sensory data that is neither figure nor ground but fundamental components to the identification of a particular place.

Character of Place Schematic

The Sensory Slider is a design tool based on the Legibility Schematic, which has a bar, that for each sense, measures the intensity of the figure/ground clarity from overload to deprivation.

Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka are the creators of the Character of Place Schematic, Legibility Schematic and Sensory Slider Diagrams/Graphics.