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Title

Buildings that Merge and Mark, Streets that Order and Dance [Images that Motivate]

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6g08d5n7>

Journal

Places, 11(3)

ISSN

0731-0455

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Publication Date

1998-01-15

Peer reviewed

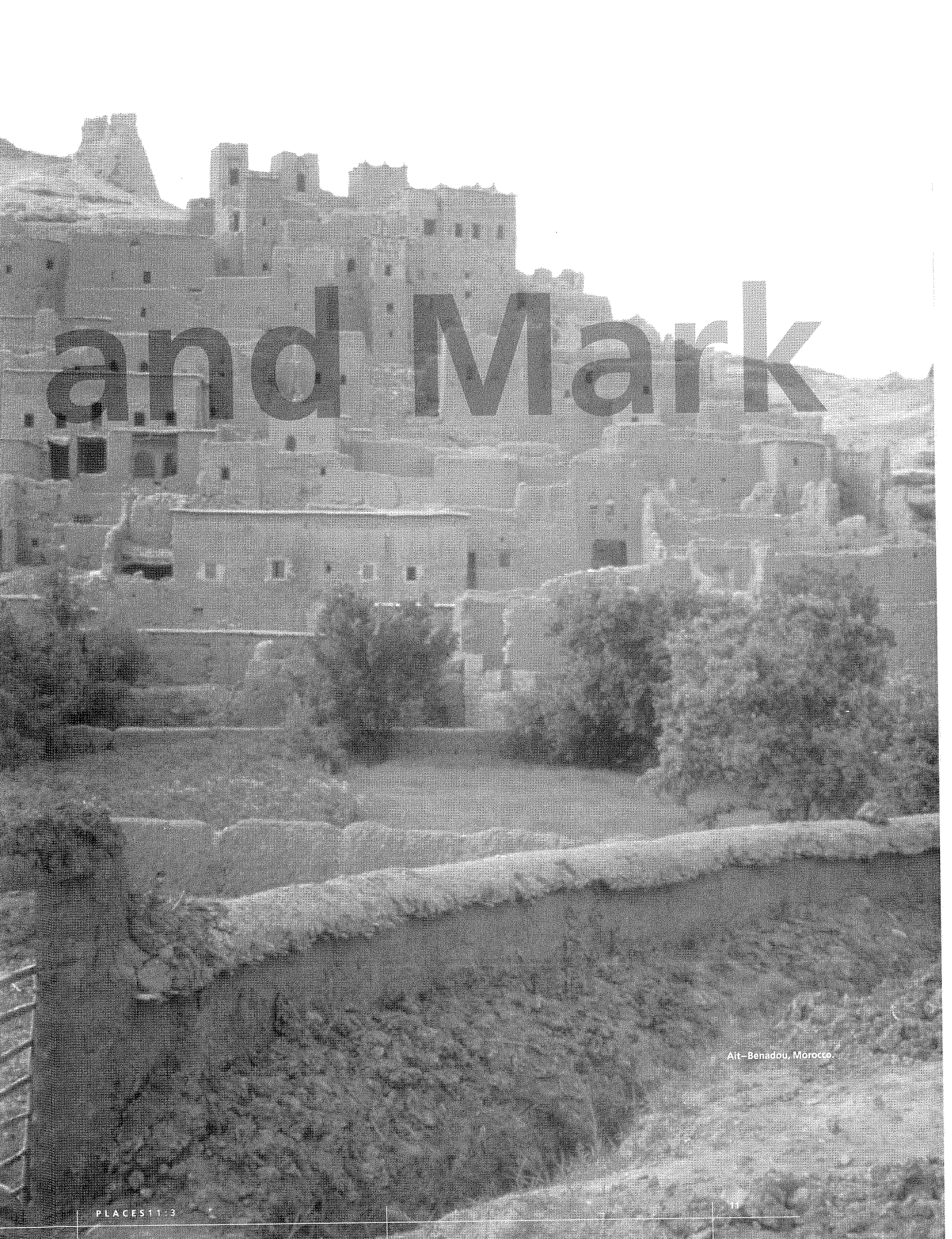
Buildings that Merge

DEAR DONLYN

Morocco is magic. The buildings in the countryside grow out of the earth, deeply rooted yet reaching skyward. The kasbahs of the Atlas mountains are molded from the indigenous earth and ornamented with geometric incisions and crenulations that bear the hand of their makers. These are buildings that, with equal power, merge and mark.

The buildings are composed of archetypal elements; towers, gates, portals, courtyards and streets that have the uncanny ability to be read as a harmonious whole growing with grandeur out of the land or to be experienced as ambiguous collages of form and light experienced in time and space. They fit to the majestic scale of the land and sky and, with equal richness, to the intimate scale of our bodies. This polyvalent nature is achieved with a modesty of means but is a paradigm for creating place and community in close dialogue with a potent natural setting.

Photos by Buzz Yudell.



Land Mark

Ait-Benadou, Morocco.

Essaouira, Morocco.



Streets that
Order and Dance

In Bali the temples, shrines and traditional villages create equally inspiring places with radically different means and materials. The shrines often merge by their use of simple materials, such as thatching, which recalls the vegetation of the adjacent hills. Structures are eloquently framed with wood, bamboo and palm fronds. Shrines are often placed in careful relationship to the views of distant sacred mountains. They merge by virtue of their materials and siting, yet they soar and mark with their vertical and horizontal repetition of the elemental roof forms. The multi-tiered roofs taper as they rise and reticulate, multiplying into the distance like some sacred forest. They merge and mark in a fashion that is consonant with their reverence for and awe of their natural and spiritual surrounding.

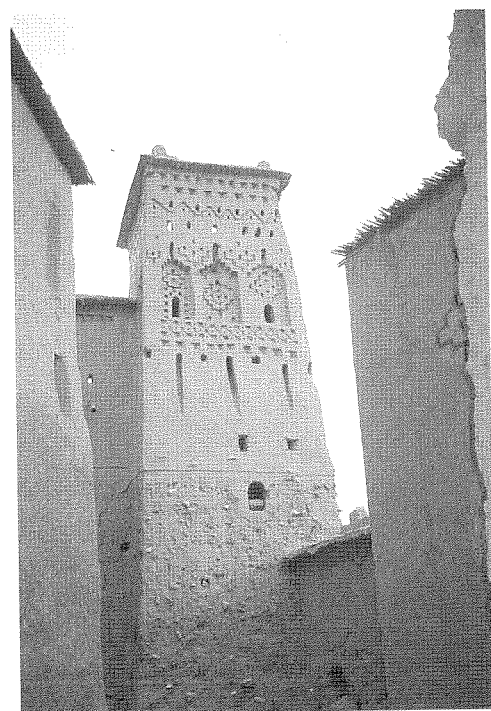
As exceptional as are the shrines of Bali, I was even more awed by the power of the traditional village. The sacred axis from mountain to sea becomes the spine of the village. The village comprises houses aligned along this street, terminated at the mountain and sea ends by appropriate shrines and marked in the middle by a communal meeting area. Each house has its own gateway as marker and each has an articulated set of pavilions that progress laterally from the street terminating in a garden of shrines to the ancestors. The street is the village and is the order and collective understanding of the community. It is the everyday and cosmic diagram.

In Morocco, the streets of the kasbahs and medinas literally dance. They are intimate, irregular, intriguing webs of experience, commerce and community. Their tight dimensions press us close to each other and to the earthen walls, but they also protect us from the intense heat and sunlight. Latticed canopies, porches and impromptu canvas swags interact with strong desert light to create washes of brightness, shade and shadow to excite our senses and enhance the life of the streets.

One day in Essaouira, I was thrilled by a distant polyphony of drums and bells. The alluring sounds ricocheted off the close walls of the streets. To my delight the sounds came nearer, though I could still see no source. Suddenly three men in vivid garb turned the corner. They were dancing with drums in hand and bells wrapped around their ankles. The street echoed joyfully. The street was dancing.

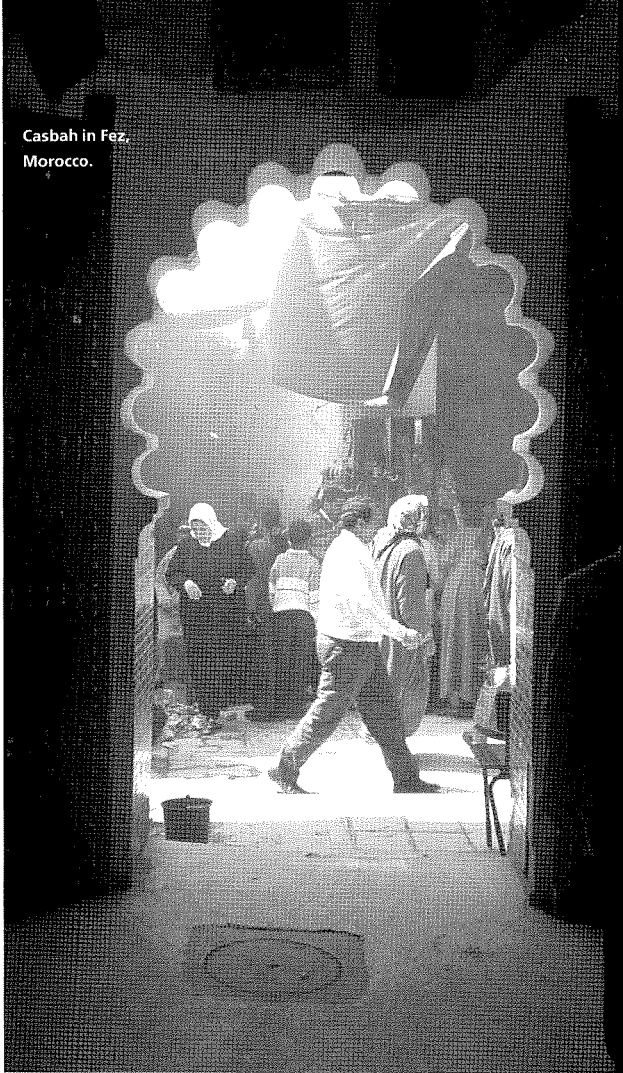


Lakeside shrine in northern Bali.



Courtyard, Ait-Benadou, Morocco.

Casbah in Fez,
Morocco.



The more I travel to and experience other cultures and their architecture, the more I understand the depth of inspiration that Charles absorbed from these cultures and, by extension, passed on to those of us with whom he collaborated. While I had never visited Bali or Morocco until this year, I felt that I recognized many of the lessons of those places. I'm sure this was partly due to the global cross-pollination that Charles had effected throughout his life.

Two of our current projects bear connections to these themes. Our recently completed Schetter House in the Pacific Palisades is a place where much of the character comes from the shaping of courtyards between building elements. We were inspired by the wonderful convent in Patzcuaro Mexico, known as *once patios* (eleven patios). Early on we decided to try for *doce patios*. The house evolved as a set of gardens and courts of varied scale and character. The interiors of all major rooms merge with these courts. The master bedroom and husband's study mark by connecting skyward to trellised porches.

With Tina Beebe's ochre-toned walls and roof countered by Tina's and Mario Violich's lush Mediterranean gardens, the house has a strong duality, merging with the land and marking toward the sky. While clearly not inspired by Moroccan architecture, we discovered underlying commonalities that put this house in the same "memory chamber" as the villages of the Atlas mountains.

Halfway to Morocco from the Palisades we are constructing the new Maryland Center for the Performing Arts. The building is sited at the edge of the campus where three different geometries converge. Here much of the pleasure is in being able to build multiple performance venues in close proximity with new academic areas for music theater and dance.

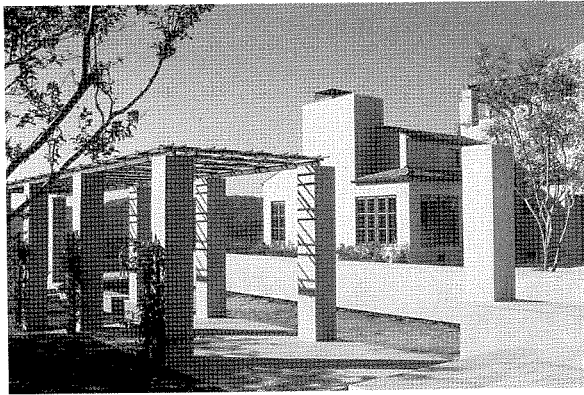
The 320,000 square foot program presented a special challenge on a pastoral campus landscape. We endeavored to organize each department around a carefully scaled academic courtyard. Each, in turn, links to a spine of performance halls organized along a street. The tensions of three adjacent campus geometries are resolved in the social space of this street. This yields a street where town and gown, students and faculty, and various departments are drawn together. It is a street which by its geometry, location and adjacencies both orders and unites, dances and excites.

I am exhilarated by the wisdom embodied in the vernacular architecture of the Balinese and Moroccan cultures. I am reminded that merging and marking, ordering and dancing, are primal urges that awaken in us and enhance our efforts to make memorable places thousands of years and thousands of miles away.

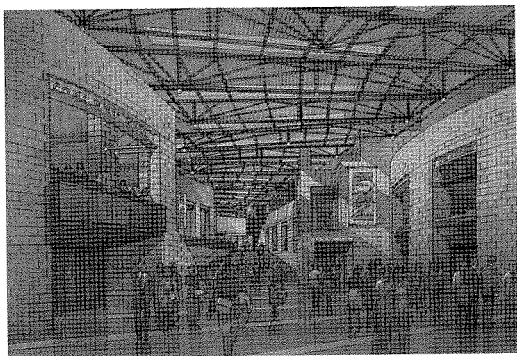
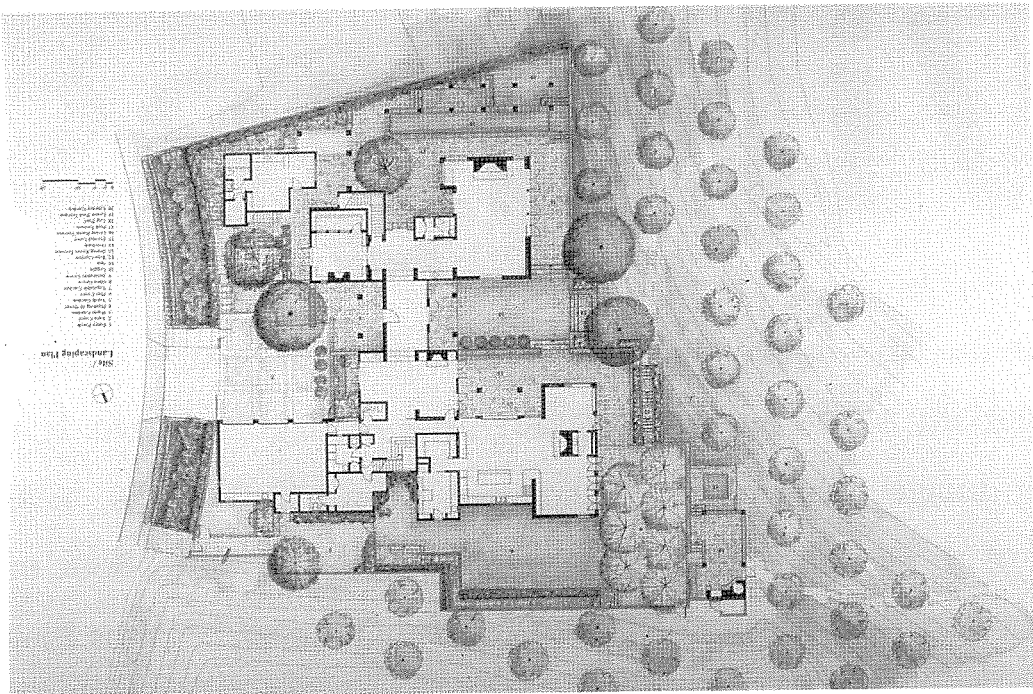
— BUZZ



Traditional axial street between
mountain and ocean in a Bali-
nese village.



Schetter House, Pacific Palisades, California
(Moore Ruble Yudell)



Performing Arts Center,
University of Maryland,
College Park, Md.
(Moore Ruble Yudell)

