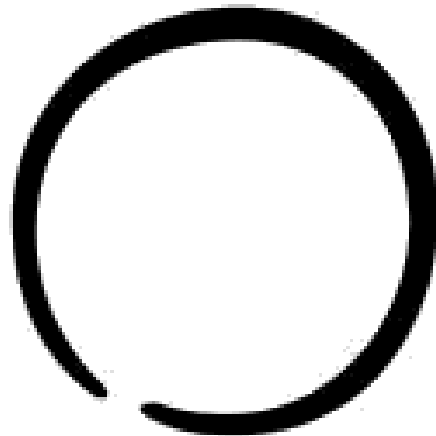


## Bioarchitecture and the Principle of 'Not Forcing'



In seeking to describe the natural process of bioarchitectural design I am drawn to Eastern philosophy and in particular the Taoist principle known as 'Wu Wei'. We can begin to understand its meanings by exploring the two words separately. Wu means 'none', 'no' or 'not' – negation. Wei has a combination of meanings, and can mean 'doing', 'making' or 'action'. As such, many scholars of Taoism have imagined that Wu Wei means 'do nothing', or 'no action', which is suggestive of a passiveness or even laziness in life.



But this is not the whole picture. According to the great philosopher and spiritual entertainer Alan Watts the best translation of Wei may be 'forcing'. So Wu Wei is the principle of 'Not Forcing' in anything that you do. It is the principle of natural doing.



In martial arts, Wu Wei is expressed and experienced during combat. You use muscle and leverage only at the point that your opponent is over extended and off balance; and then the correct and timely application of muscle power can literally throw your opponent across the room. In any expression of living energy there is a time for action, and a time for passive receptivity. This is Wu Wei.

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Wu Wei is based on knowledge of the tide. Wu Wei is not a matter of cultivated passivity, or even of cultivated or contrived spontaneity; it is a natural emergent property of life and living systems, if left alone to evolve without the mismanagement of the egoic mind. Wu Wei is the art of sailing rather than the art of rowing; it is going with the flow of information and energy, rather than struggling against it.



The general perception of modern life is one of mostly stressful attempts to row or swim upstream against the natural flow of the river in the belief that in order to get to the Source we must learn how to paddle the water furiously and beat someone else to it. There is an inherent sense of competition promoted, with success usually being measured relative to a perceived standard and always compared to others.

The design process is oftentimes considered, practiced and taught in the same light; imagined to be the result of focused time, effort, dedication and deep concentration. Skill in this process is usually considered based on specific proscribed training and education. In addition, limiting notions and concepts of ownership and attachment form the boundary conditions of what is generally believed to be possible. Wu Wei offers us a fresh perspective, which points to a more natural expression of our innate creativity.

One translation from the Tao Te Ching, by Priya Hemenway points to the essence of the meaning of Wu Wei beautifully:

*“The Sage is occupied with the unspoken  
and acts without effort.  
Teaching without verbosity,  
producing without possessing,  
creating without regard to result,  
claiming nothing,  
the Sage has nothing to lose”*

So the bioarchitect seeks not recognition, respect or remuneration. And it is in this honest state that these things naturally arise. The bioarchitect wishes to be the flute through which the Universe gently blows its tune. The natural creative impulse is unhindered and unattached. The creative mind is free to follow the path of least resistance, which invites in the waves of optimal potential which pattern the innate desire of life to evolve and express.



As with the martial arts, the bioarchitect trains the body and mind with knowledge, practice, experience and feedback; resulting in an awareness that is both silent and powerful. The

Japanese call this state 'Zanshin', which can be translated to mean 'Heart / Mind everywhere'; and points to a directed knowledge and heightened awareness. If left to itself, Zanshin naturally leads to 'Mushin'; synonymous in essence with Wu Wei, which can be translated as the effortless timely action that springs forth without thought, as a direct reflection and expression of the perfect moment of information and energy flow.



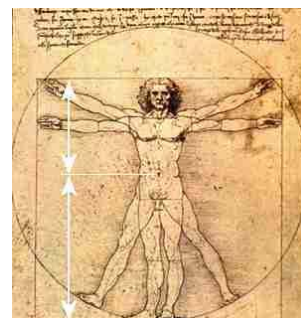
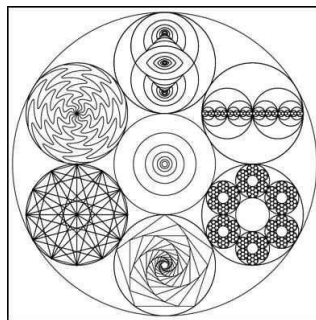
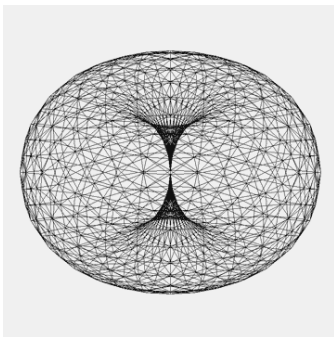
It cannot be forced, predicted, sought, contained or indeed defined without resulting in an unsatisfactory contrivance. It is an emergent property of life in action and represents the ideal natural creative state. Turning this fundamental state of being into an integrated skill is the basis of bioarchitectural training.

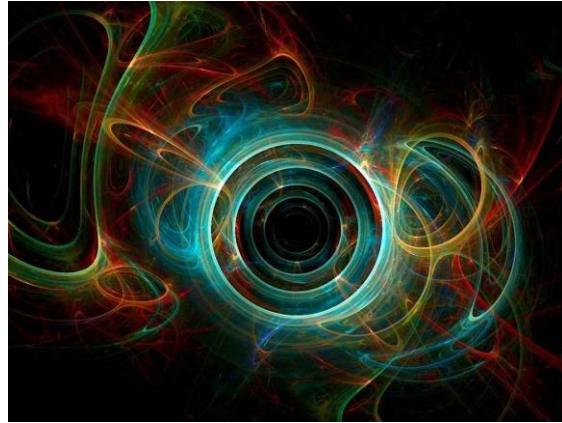
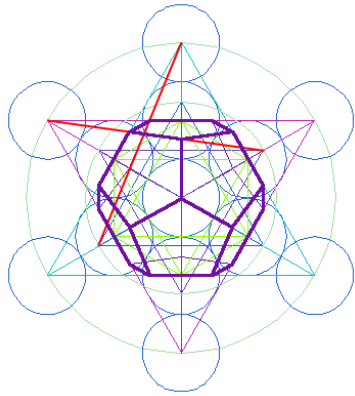
The training is designed to be natural and easy, but to the extent we have been trained otherwise there may be some resistance to its effortless application. The good news is that it does get easier with time and practice, as long as it is both playful and enthusiastic and not limited by attachment to the outcome.

When invited to apply this natural ability to the design of a space the bioarchitect needs to 'not force' the process. In practical terms each design commission is an opportunity to relax into the stream of possibility, in effect seeking deep resonance with that which already is and aligning with what wishes to be. Like Michelangelo removing the excess stone material to reveal the statue beneath, bioarchitecture offers the same potential to navigate the matrix and express the best outcome.



Knowledge and understanding of the shapes, forms, ratios, patterns, attributes, tendencies, expression and movements of Life is literally vital in this process, but the ability to let go and allow is the true key to success. So cultivating Wu Wei by not trying lubricates the natural emergence of our bioarchitectural design abilities; and filling in the time with learning and practice provides the necessary support and awareness to make the process complete.





It is not meant to be hard.

Remember, as Bill Hicks said: "it's just a ride".