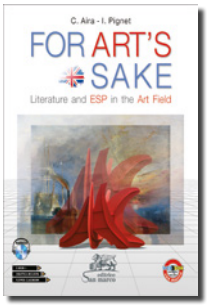
C. Aira - I. Pignet
FOR ART'S SAKE
Literature and ESP in the Art Field



Human scale cities

Jan Gehl, Professor at the Danish Real Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen and recognized as a follower of Jane Jacobs, the 'grandmother' of urbanism and humanist planning, speaks about the importance of planning buildings according to an urban scale.

Jan Gehl Interview

What is the meaning of "human scale cities"?
When I talk about this concept, I take human senses as a starting point and how we, people, move. Our senses are made perfectly for people to walk at around 5 kilometres per hour. In the old metropolis, everything was made to a suitable size for a person, but after the introduction of modernism and the automobile, the importance of this scale was forgotten.
We currently live in complex megacities. In such cities, is it possible to think of a human scale?
Certainly. When it comes to where people live, work, go shopping, and move around as pedestrians, we could easily make things better. Venice is a city made for people. The average street is 3 meters wide, which makes it a city suitable for walking with a lot of interesting public spaces. It is a city that truly has a human scale, that is small, personal, and intimate. Meanwhile, a place like Dubai is a city for dinosaurs, not for human beings.
In your book Cities for People*, you say: "First we shape cities and then they shape us." What exactly does that mean to you?*
That the physical frameworks in which we live and spend time have a great influence on our behaviour and lifestyle. It really could make quite a drastic difference to your lifestyle if you lived in an outer suburb in an American city compared to if you lived in Barcelona, for example. It has been demonstrated that people that live in the suburbs have a lower life expectancy than those who live in cities. Why is that? Largely because in cities you walk more, while in the suburbs cars are used more frequently.

ACTIVITIES

1 *Summarize the text above.*