

movement, it has been found that cognitive skills such as language reside rather more in one half of the brain than the other. The vast majority of us who are right handed are likely to use the left brain not only for steering our pen across the paper when we write, but also to decide what words to use. Left-handed people are quite likely to have quite different patterns of communication between the two halves of the cortex. It is interesting to note that when we look across a university as a whole, we find higher than average levels of both left-handedness and dyslexia in the faculty of architecture!

So there are many ways in which we maintain a constant perception in the face of changing visual sensation. The size, shape and colour of an object are all generally perceived by us to remain constant as it moves around in space, or as we move around it. Of course the visual sensations of shape, size and colour are continuously changing. Our size constancy mechanism is absolutely central to our appreciation of some of the most common of the tricks of the architectural trade. Architects talk quite specifically about the 'scale' of a building. They do not refer here to the scale at which they draw it, 1 : 100 or 1 : 50 and so on. Scale here means the effect the building has on us in terms of relative rather than absolute size. We can have buildings that are on a grand scale, or buildings that are on a more humble scale. As these adjectives suggest, the buildings seem to be trying to play a role in society with their grandness or humility. As a result, they speak through the language of space to us about the people who paid for, designed or occupy them. The famous Paris Opera was completed by Garnier in 1874 on an enormous scale (Fig. 3.2). Everything about this building is quite simply huge – the entrance, the foyer, the famous staircase and of course ultimately the auditorium itself all seem to be grand. So just how did Garnier achieve this effect of massive, almost monumental scale?

We read scale from those features of buildings that specifically relate to items in the world that we are most able to hold constant in our minds. That of course mostly means bits of the building that relate to us. There is nothing we are quite so attached to in this world as ourselves. There is nothing that we appreciate the geometry of more than the human form – quite simply, we are vitally interested in it! We see it, admire it and explore it every day. We have to relate to it when we interact with others. There is nothing more remarkable to us than a giant or a dwarf, and extraordinarily fat or thin people similarly inevitably attract our attention. The sight of the poor emaciated souls who suffered starvation in the prison camps of the Second World War strike a terrible pang of emotion in all but the most hardened heart. If someone we know well changes his or her appearance, we will (and indeed may be expected to) comment on this when next we meet. We are able to carry in our minds for many years an image of the size and