THOUGHT AND INVENTION

A STUDY OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM THROUGH THE PARTICULAR AND THE UNIVERSAL

MICHAEL RITCHIE

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Professor Hans C. Rott
Chairman

Professor William Galloway

Professor Frank Weiner

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Form, Space, Monumentality, Archetype
This thesis study investigates the significance of the archetypal images of architecture and the inherent relationship between space, structure, and form. How are space and form defined by architecture? Is form a premeditated thing, and, if so, how is it intuitively understood by the creative process? By studying the models and patterns through which the autonomous language of architecture is communicated, the thesis study attempts to develop an understanding of the nature of form through universal and particular conditions.

Rather than present the study as a completed body of work ending with an objective conclusion, the included images and text represent an ongoing investigation addressing critical architectural ideas including the relationship between form and context and the role of tradition and historical precedent as a deciding factor of modern architecture.
FOR MY FAMILY

and

FOR SARAH

IN MEMORY  4/16/07
The universal forms of architecture exist through the archetypal images which are continually re-shaped and interpreted by architecture. These images construct the language of architecture and allow for an understanding of space through the physical shaping of form. Our understanding of architecture begins here; form takes shape through the rational ordering of abstract space resulting in relationships that can be easily recognized and understood.

"The loss of the image is a major characteristic of the present environmental crisis. This proposition may not appear convincing to everyone, since we are no longer used to thinking of architecture in terms of images. For too long we have been giving exclusive attention to function and structure. Without images, however, our environment is reduced to a mere spatial container."

C.N. Schulz, Principles of Modern Architecture

A R C H E T Y P A L I M A G E S
ARCHETYPAL IMAGES

abstract forms in space
ARCHETYPAL IMAGES

abstract forms in space
ARCHETYPAL IMAGES
abstract forms in space

[Image of abstract forms in space]
The metaphor of the ruin is realized through the concept of the architectural ‘fragment’. Through this idea, the fragments are understood as autonomous elements that have been subtracted, added, rotated, translated, and detached. As a result of the geometric manipulation of these elements, the opportunity exists within each condition to communicate the inherent space-giving qualities. This can be seen in the juxtaposition of space created through the asymmetrical arrangement of parts.

fragment: a part broken off, detached, or incomplete

Above - Old Sheldon Church, Sheldon, SC

ARCHETYPAL IMAGES

the modern ruin
In architecture, monumentality implies that we expect something more from our buildings than mere “functional” fulfillment. It should be noted that, as it is used here, the term “monumentality” is not limited to describing a building’s mere height or physical presence but involves the lasting significance of an architectural image as a desire of architecture.

A need for monumentality in architecture arises from our evident decay of architectural expectations revealed to us by the present state of expected mediocrity. It is apparent that our current built environment often reveals a landscape void of any real significant meaning and value. The thesis project attempts to return the monumental forms and images of the past in an effort to reconcile with loss of meaning in architectural expression.

“Monumentality in architecture may be defined as a quality, a spiritual quality inherent in a structure which conveys the feeling of its eternity, that it cannot be added to or changed.”

Louis Kahn, “Monumentality”
How is architecture to contribute to an existing place that has established itself as historically, culturally, and politically significant? The intervention of architecture can serve to strengthen the idea of place by revealing to us the existing qualities within the contextual setting. As Peter Zumthor states, “Every new work of architecture intervenes in a specific historical situation. It is essential to the quality of the intervention that the new building should embrace qualities that can enter into a meaningful dialogue with the existing situation.”

W. G. Clark, Replacement
F O R M   A N D   C O N T E X T

the particular

Site:
Charleston, South Carolina
404 King Street

Program:
The Charleston Center for the Visual Arts
a collection of spaces to support the visual arts community

The site is located at a point of critical transition within the city’s historic downtown. This threshold links the historic image of the city south of Calhoun Street to areas of recent building trends and renovations to the north. The proposal is to replace the vacant Charleston County Library building with a collection of spaces intended to support local artists and students in conjunction with displaying permanent and traveling exhibitions.

Above - The old Charleston County Library
FORM AND CONTEXT
the perception of place

404 King Street
site of the old Charleston County Library

Historic Marion Square
FORM AND CONTEXT

Spatial Concept → Relation of the individual elements (vs. static volumes)

on the boundary/limit/relationships at the transitions [space] [space] to support the exterior flow idea.

Moore the connected → relation → the door. Structure infers their relationship (ENCLOSURE)

Spatial Complexity through Arrangement.

Wall Column Stair Root

Program → guided by the need for a specific atmosphere:

- Also to strengthen the pedestrian space.
- Study will be on the impact of the atmosphere on surrounding streets, squares, pedestrian connections.

Scale / demand, given, high, [esoteric], [informal]

Building as "EVENT-GENERATOR."

Context → influence on media / external program

Workers within the limits of context (Rules) → playing "outside consent" of same team.

"Relationship before the (C)

Can they inform each other.

Option

- Removed

Design

[Arranged informal by program]

NATURE

Furniture

Home to the Civil Firm

Implied structure → what could be there?

What should be there?

Fragile

External to building structure to get - implied space.

Process = delight

Nostalgia
FORM AND CONTEXT (process sketches and notes)
The form of the building begins with the image of the city. The building footprint is derived in part from the geometry of the site following the defined edge of the existing city block. The initial form is based on a desire for symmetry and references the classical model of a circle within a square. As the program took shape, portions were subtracted, added, and extruded to appropriately accommodate the site and building functions.
Architecture inevitably begins with thoughts of space. These spaces are particular to an ideal situation and though yet unrealized by specific shape, are the first attempts at understanding the nature of form. Space is the precursor to form; it is the uncontained medium through which all material relationships exist. Through the ordering of these abstract spaces we begin to define the boundaries of architectural form.

"Space is nothing else than the form of all phenomena of the external sense, that is, the subjective condition of the sensibility under which alone external intuition is possible."

Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason
The outward appearance of the building conveys a visual desire for physical permanence. The exterior fragment walls are constructed of cast-in-place concrete. For the remaining enclosure, reinforced concrete masonry cavity walls are used to support the roof structure consisting of steel beams and skylights.

Throughout the building, the expression of structure is communicated as a way to inform the space. The placement of columns within the building coincides with a series of roof-top elliptical skylights. At these moments, natural light is introduced as a way to heighten the visual experience of the column-beam intersection.

"A tectonic experience, however, conveys both a sense of the necessary and freedom. It conveys a sense of the necessary because order is delimited by the form-giving capacity of the materials used."

Demetri Porphyrios, "Classical Architecture"
*A MODERN VERNACULAR*

**WHAT IS VERNACULAR**

- Responding to the existing forms of the South
  - How is this addressed?
  - Formal condition → Symbol

**CULTURE**

- *How is this addressed?*

**PLACE**

- Sub: [SPACE, STRUCTURE, FORM]

**VERNACULAR FORM**

- Tradition
  - Site
  - Symbol
  - Identity
    - Space
    - Material

- Role of existing built to new building

**CULTURAL**

- Only walls, no stairs? Roman pediments

- Concerns w/ Brochure city

- Schumacher (sculptor)
e. Transparency/Proportion

- Beaded, Repurposed to the Universal
- Continuously rooted in historical context.

404 King Street

- Layout too?

Shade/definitive
- Fragments first, then development of openings

Diagram: Oblivion
- At certain places, the 2 opposed orders engage each other.
- Hardware Details
- Window Details
  lites/sash/insel?
- Roof? Detail Existing

A Sketch The City:

How are existing buildings oriented?

- What are existing paths
- What types of spaces are created?

Do existing fenestration lines meet?
Porch
Overhang
Louver
Openings (laser)
Courtyard
De-Materialization of Exterior? Stucco?
Structural Interior
Interpretation of porch
LOOK @ HERZOG & DE MEURON STREET
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