LOW MEMORIAL LIBRARY: AN ARGUMENT FOR THE RESTITUTION OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

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0.0_Abstract

This thesis investigates how architecture is utilized by Institutions of higher learning as a means of making their pedagogical objectives available to the academic community. It is a study of those monuments which hold the prominent position on a campus and have played a significant role in redefining the image of an Institution. The pedagogical objectives of these structures are made accessible to the user in two ways: through the image that the facade portrays and through the lived experience of the interior. Each of these pedagogical tools functions separate of the other.

A lived experience is a user's personal engagement with a space as facilitated by their sensations, emotions and cognition of it. The use of the building, defined in this thesis as the specific physical actions which are designated to take place in a space, dictates how the user interacts with the space as well other persons around them. It guides their movement through the space, the things that they do and the people they meet. It influences how they act, and feel. A use, as constituted in a lived experience, is encountered at the level of the body. The interaction with the space, then, is intensely individual, yet becomes a collective experience by way of becoming a shared memory of all who have used, or experienced, the building.

A lived experience is reified through sustained interaction with the interior. It is through this interaction that educational values are instilled in the memory. The dimension of time is critical to this comprehension. While the message portrayed by a façade is instantly comprehended, the self-realization that is made possible through using the building occurs slowly over the years of a student's academic life.

Low Memorial Library of Columbia University serves as the main case study. While this structure has historically and continuously served as a symbol of the University, it has lost the ability to convey the pedagogical objectives of the University. This is a result of the building's adaptation to a ceremonial hall and administrative center. The causes of this loss are explained, and the consequences discussed at length. Ultimately, a proposal is made to adapt the structure to a graduate student center. This adaptation would allow for the restoration of the pedagogical objectives that were originally embodied in the structure.