The Indiana War Veterans Memorial Museum

Exploring a sacred and honorable space.

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Aerial Photograph
"Hanoi Hilton"
North Vietnamese P.O.W Prison
Hanoi, North Vietnam
Abstract

It is utterly impossible for someone who has never been in combat to fully comprehend the true horror of war. War is abrupt, violent and impartial as to race, creed or color. It has decimated entire generations of people of all persuasions. People under fire establish a bond that is unheard of in the civilian world. It transcends a traditional familial relationship. Many of our nation’s best and brightest recall moments spent next to their buddy in furious combat as the defining moment and highlight of their life. Countless Americans have answered their country’s call to arms and fought for the freedom we enjoy today.

Names like Bunker Hill, Gettysburg, Belleau Wood, Omaha Beach, Iwo Jima, The Chosin Reservoir and Khe Sanh have become synonymous with honor and bravery. America owes these men and women a debt of gratitude that it can never fully repay. We can only honor their commitment to the cause of freedom.

The museum will memorialize the men and women of the United States who have served their country in war time.

It will not glorify war in any manner. The architecture must convey a sense of sacredness and honor to memorialize the men and women who fought and died for their country in time of war.
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Program

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<th>Space summary</th>
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<tr>
<td>Entry lobby / Hall of Veterans</td>
<td>7,000 sf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent exhibition space</td>
<td>18,000 sf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporary exhibition space</td>
<td>6,000 sf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hall of Remembrance</td>
<td>3,000 sf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gift shop</td>
<td>1,000 sf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lounge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cloakroom</td>
<td>200 sf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public restrooms</td>
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<td>Public phones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive offices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Studio workshop</td>
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<td>Maintenance shop</td>
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<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>600 sf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Museum Storage</td>
<td>5,000 sf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loading dock</td>
<td>250 sf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total square footage</td>
<td>49,990 sf</td>
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Site

Indianapolis, Indiana

The site is located on Meridian Street adjacent to Memorial Mile in downtown Indianapolis. The Scottish Rite Cathedral is directly South and the American Legion State Headquarters is East of the site. The site was chosen due to its direct engagement of the classical axis that runs from Monument Circle to the Marion County Library. The World War Memorial, Military Plaza, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam Memorials Dramatically illustrate the patriotic heritage of Indianapolis and the entire state of Indiana. The site is certainly hallowed ground to the men and women of Indiana who have served their country in time of war.
Research
Sacred adj. 1. consecrated to a god or deity; holy. 2. of a religion or religious rites and practices; opposed to profane, secular. 3. granted the respect accorded holy things; venerated; hallowed. 4. dedicated to some person, place, purpose, etc.: as sacred to his memory. 5. Secured by a religious feeling against violation; inviolate.
Church of the Light
Architect: Tadao Ando

The Church of the Light, located on the outskirts of Osaka, Japan is a striking example of the sacred power of the architecture of Tadao Ando. The building is a cube bisected by a free-standing wall originating in the front and slicing to the rear of the church. The dynamic angle of the wall charges the space with energy. The voided cross in wall behind the altar is the axis mundi. It is the point where communication between the sacred world and the heavens takes place. The space achieves the same degree of sacredness as Corbusiers Ronchamps.
The Horyuji Temple

Nestled in an area of gently rolling hills, the Horyuji Temple is the oldest wooden structure in the world. It is the pre-eminent example of early Japanese Buddhist architecture. Mircea Eliade's "system of the world" is clearly evident, but in different ways than the Ise Shrine. The Horyuji Temple is made up of several structures surrounded by multiple gates. The first structure one encounters is the gatehouse after already passing through a gate outside the temple. The gatehouse has statues on both sides to guard against evil entering the temple. It is a direct reflection of Eliade's threshold between the sacred world and the profane world. The gatehouse is on axis with the pagoda, Buddha hall, and lecture hall.

The Pagoda is the premiere symbol of Japanese Buddhist architecture. It is built on a square plan with five stories of roofs that gradually decrease in size as they go up. As a result the Pagoda has a distinct sense of structural stability. Inside the Pagoda is the heart pillar that Eliade speaks of in The Sacred and Profane. A relic from the Buddha is placed directly underneath the heart pillar. This axis mundi represents the journey that a Buddhist must complete to achieve nirvana. The heart pillar is capped by nine rings that represent the path a Buddhist must follow to enlightenment. At the base of the pillar there are four scenes from the life of the Buddha.

The Buddha hall (Kondo) is the next structure in the temples bi-axial plan. Inside, a seated statue of the Buddha with upraised hand denotes a welcoming gesture. Two statues of bosatsu, which represent the supreme human example of compassion, are on either side of the Buddha statue. The bosatsu statues were believed to emanate a spiritual energy as a guide for other humans on their path to enlightenment.
Upon examination, the Ise Shrine, a Shinto temple, shows many of the aspects of sacred space that Mircea Eliade discusses in The Sacred and Profane. Eliade speaks of the "system of the world" seen in the sacred spaces of traditional cultures. This system is directly reflected in the Ise Shrine. The Ise Shrine, in the words of Eliade, is "a break in homogeneity of space." It is distinctly separated from the profane world by an elaborate series of fences that enclose the shrine. The threshold symbolizes the exact place where the sacred world and the profane world communicate, where one can enter the sacred world. A wooden pole (heart pillar) symbolizes the axis mundi where communication with the heavens is possible. At Ise the pole is placed with half of its length underground and the other half protruding into the center of the shrine which is elevated. The pole is shielded from human view. Burial of the pole is indicative of the Shinto emphasis on earth and nature as sacred. It is shielded from human view and taboo in nature, which increases the power of its presence as a manifestation of divine power. It symbolizes a direct connection between the underworld, earth and the heavens. Surrounding the axis mundi is our world, which places the axis at the "center of the world" or "navel of the earth." The act of placement in the "center of the world" is a direct attempt to recreate the creation of the universe by the gods. It is at this center that a break in the plane takes place, this break is the boundary where space becomes sacred or real. This is precisely where man is closest to the gods. The four sides of the shrine symbolize the four cardinal directions of the cosmos allowing for orientation to the creator. Every twenty years the shrine is disassembled and reconstructed in an adjacent space to ensure the purity of the sacred shrine. Workers are specially trained and dressed in white to guarantee the sanctity of the shrine. Eliade speaks of many societies that rebuild the sacred space yearly to experience the sacred world as it was when newly formed by the hands of the creator.
Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Architect: Maya Lin

I have visited The Vietnam Veterans Memorial more than ten times, and each visit is equally as powerful as the first. As I enter the area around the monument and get my first glimpse of its simple form I am immediately aware of the quiet that surrounds it. The drone of the traffic on Constitution Ave. is the only sound. As I come to the beginning of the Wall, it seems to grow directly from the earth. I make my way down the path beginning to scan the names. The polished black granite reflects myself into the wall as the names run over me. I think it is a window to my own soul. By now the sound of the traffic is gone and I am surrounded in complete silence. Commiserating with the men and women who gave their lives for an ungrateful nation. -The Author

Exactly what makes a space sacred is often in the eye of the beholder. That which is sacred to one culture may not be to another. The sacral meaning established by a culture in a sacred space may or may not be similar to what another culture views as sacred. For example, a Native American burial ground would certainly be sacred to that culture. However, it was probably not held sacred by the hordes of white settlers that streamed West in the 19th century.

A few select spaces can transcend cultural boundaries and appear sacred too more than one culture. An example of this type of transcending space would be The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. This space can bring a Vietnam Veteran to his knees in remembrance of his fallen comrades. However, it can speak equally as powerful to any veteran of any war from any country. The Wall has even transcended these groups and appealed as a sacred place to people of all nations.
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Architect: James Ingo Freed

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is undoubtedly one of the late twentieth centuries' most profound architectural statements. Far more than a museum, it is a living institution dedicated to research and teaching as well as to contemplation and commemoration.

Certain sections of the museum are created to resemble Jewish ghetto architecture. These symbolic associations give emotion to the building. Bridges and towers evoke an industrial past so that architecture, engineering, and museology merge inseparably. The Hall of Remembrance ends the museum experience, providing a calm, abstract space of contemplation.
Resolution

The Indiana War Veterans Memorial Museum

Exploring a sacred and honorable space

Two rows of trees line the Meridian Street facade forming the first threshold of the site. A reflecting pool runs the entire length of the museum and is the second threshold. Bridges, spaced along the site, allow for access over the pool and are symbolic of purification. The main entry is pulled from the wall plane to announce its presence as the gatehouse into the sacred world. Upon entering, the visitor will make an abrupt right and commence the journey through the Hall of Veterans. The immediate right is symbolic of the violent and abrupt nature of war.

Final model
Resolution

The material palette includes all natural materials. Indiana Limestone is used for the walls, slate for flooring in all spaces except the Hall of Remembrance and wood for the floor in the Hall of Remembrance and furniture throughout the museum. A limestone frieze depicting war images from the Civil War to Vietnam runs the length of the Hall of Veterans and projects a sense of movement through the axial hall. At the end of the hall visitors enter the first of three galleries. Between each gallery there are small atria for seating and reflection. The cylindrical Hall of Remembrance acts as a spiritual ending to the museum experience and punctuates the design. The light is brought into the space through a slit around the roof. The effect is light bathing the walls of this personal reflective space. The floor of the cylinder and all furniture is wood due to its tactile nature as a way to soften the design.
Resolution

FLOOR PLAN
1" = 50'-0"

MERIDIAN STREET

A  NORTH
Reflection

Final thoughts...

The breadth of research led to a deep understanding of just what constitutes a sacred space. The making of a sacred space is a difficult undertaking to say the least. It is readily apparent as to whether or not the space in question is sacred. People perceive a sacred space but few can actually quantify why a space is sacred. Research into how traditional cultures have created sacred space proved to be an excellent starting position in designing a sacred space. The knowledge gained came to fruition during the design process. The light box used for simulating lighting conditions yielded great insight into how light really acts within a space. The information gained by a deeper understanding of light was influential on the qualities of light sought after in the computer model. The entire museum was designed in a computer generated 3D environment. This allowed for an evolution of the model that enhanced creativity. The ability to save an idea and take it a different way led to more experimentation with design alternatives. In the end, time was the deciding factor.

On a personal note:

This project is me. Having served in the Marines, I am keenly aware of the men and women who came before me and secured the way of life that we all take for granted. A day does not go by that I do not recall something in my training to deal with everyday life. That five years in the Corps was the best I ever spent. The thesis was a redemption of the Esprit de Corps instilled in me as a United States Marine.

Semper Fidelis
Bibliography


Key, Jane Holtz. "Cities don't need more memorials - they need to reorchestrate their own urban discord," Landscape Architecture, February 1993.


