VISUAL COMMUNICATION OF MEANING THROUGH FORMS IN ARCHITECTURE

BY

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A PROPOSAL FOR THE GREYHOUND RESTAURANT/LOUNGE
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I would like to extend my appreciation to the committee members who provided me with their thoughtful insight and support. I would also like to thank the many people who graciously gave of their time to support this project; the Honorable Mayor Paul Helmke for his initial ideas for the project; Joseph Christoff for permission to use the building; Victor Martin and John Riley for their support of me as a student; and all of the many friends and acquaintances who supported my endeavors. Thank you.
The proposal for the Greyhound Restaurant/Lounge is my personal exploration of communication in architecture; communication of meaning through forms and communication of meaning through time. The transformation of the former Bus Terminal, located at the corner of Webster Street and Jefferson Boulevard in downtown Fort Wayne, Indiana, offers a variety of opportunities to explore ways in which communication occurs. Understanding what is being communicated depends on how an individual interprets the building more so than on the intentions of the designer.

Learning to look is a pleasure; the buildings will embrace your eyes.
-Judith Lynch Waldhorn

Architecture occurs when a building and a person like each other.
-William Wayne Caudill, William Merriweather Pena, Paul Kennon
We shape our buildings, and afterwards they shape us.
-Winston S. Churchill

Man and his environment have created a never-ending love affair, be it good or bad. This environment of which I speak is the environment man has made for himself. Understanding this complex relationship between man and his environment is important for those of us as designers who have taken the responsibility to create it. Learning about the intricacies within the relationship is a never-ending experience. Architecture is a personal experience. As a designer, I cannot create an experience. I can only create an opportunity for that experience.

It is not enough to see architecture; you must experience it.
-Steen Eller Rasmussen

But how does my personal experience in creating this opportunity relate to what others will experience? Many decisions are made in the design process that affect the final outcome. How well are these reasons communicated in the final product? The most important influence upon man's perceptions then becomes the messages or meanings that are being communicated in our environment.

Meaning results from a complex interaction of forces, some under the control of the designer, some under the control of the interpreter, and some the result of a culture which neither controls. An architect may have the best intentions as he designs a building, but he cannot control or predict how people will receive the product. The responses to a building would depend more on how it was interpreted than
on how it was designed. The greater the number of issues addressed by the designer, the greater the number of varied interpretations, the more dynamic the building and the longer it maintains its significance.

The building which, long after the fashionable idioms of its time have degenerated into cliché's, still continues to contribute some memorable quality to human life is the building which draws its communicative force from the unchanging emotional associations of the archetypal elements in the architectural language, those which are most deeply rooted in the common sensory experience of humanity.
- S. Gauldie (Bonta)

Too often older buildings are left to become derelict and forgotten. Their use in society becomes obsolete. As society grows and changes, so too, does the original intent and function of its built environment. Society is too quick to condemn an older building or to make a monument of it. Designating a building a historic landmark places severe restrictions to any alteration to the building. This in turn places restrictions on how the building can be used in society. Older buildings need not always be preserved, but can contribute to a living history where older buildings are transformed into an active part of today's society. Heritage is a vital part of a city's beauty and character.

We may live without her [architecture], and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her.
-John Ruskin

Let us, while waiting for new monuments, preserve the ancient monuments.
-Victor Hugo
When we build, let us think that we build forever.
- John Ruskin.

Additive transformation is a sedimentary process. It ensures a sense of continuity in the construction of the town, and a sense of ‘place’ in both historical and spatial terms: in historical terms, because it is in this way that the city builds upon itself, and buildings become repositories of successive interventions; and in spatial terms because a true complexity and meaningful variety arise from the gradual accumulation of elements which confirm and reinforce the space in an incremental process. This sense of continuity is further reinforced by the intelligence of successive generations which, through trial and error, produces a type of architecture which, by being so meaningful in social terms, by being elaborated with the concurrence of so many people becomes almost necessarily a product of great quality.
- Rodrigo Perez de Arce.

The former Greyhound Bus Terminal has an endearing charm which has transcended time and remains as such today. A number of careless remodeling projects over the years has left it in such a condition that restoration would be uneconomical. Yet its significance should not be overlooked. The project undertaken here is to renovate the existing building and reintroduce it as a contributing member of society. The decision to transform the terminal into a restaurant/lounge is based on economic viability and current growth trends in downtown Fort Wayne.

The most recognized aspect of the building is the street facade to the north with its bold color and dynamic form. Throughout all the remodeling over the years, the facade has remained virtually untouched. For this transformation, the street facade has remained intact, aside from some minor restoration, to take advantage of its high visibility and
recognition. The remainder of the existing building, including the new additions, is transformed in a manner complementary to the facade and Art Moderne style. Many of the new forms are derived from elements already existing or original to the building.

Architecture can reach out beyond the period of its birth, beyond the social class that called it into being, beyond the style to which it belongs.
-Sigfried Giedion

The decision to transform the terminal into a restaurant/lounge is based on economic viability and current growth trends in downtown Fort Wayne. The interior offers a variety of different spaces which give rise to the different environments created inside. The building offers a varied night life from a "loud" club to an intimate dining room. The establishment caters to a lunch crowd, the after-work crowd, and evening theater-goers. It is meant to appeal to people from age 21 to 81 years. Much of the interior styling is derived from the twenties and thirties; Art Deco, Art Moderne and the roadside diner. The eclectic approach offers a nostalgic theme which has been a successful formula in restaurant design. The interior also retains the form and spirit of many features from the original design.

The focal point of the interior is the former waiting lobby, the large two-story space, centrally located in the building. Whether directly or indirectly, the lobby opens onto all other major spaces in the building. Its volume, location, and relationship to other spaces make it the most
significant interior space.

The entry corridor offers the first impression of the interior character. From this space, a patron may gain access to all other major public spaces. Flow between the corridor and and adjacent spaces is important. These transitions are distinctive in form or finish to emphasize the different character of the many spaces.

These two spaces form the backbone around which the entire public portion of the building evolves and responds. The remainder of the spaces offer varying degrees of privacy and intimacy. Their character is meant to appeal to a diverse group of people. The different public spaces, and the functional aspects of the service areas, combine to create a cohesive, functional, and pleasing environment.

Many decisions related to design and function were made to arrive at the current product. What I have attempted to do here is to establish the influences and priorities to which I respond in making these decisions. As a designer I cannot say the work is complete. New, different, and perhaps even better interpretations are bound to arise. No matter how much information or meaning I intend to communicate through the built form, only a certain portion of the viewers/users will actually receive the message. The success of the project depends not solely on the design, but on its appeal to the users. Architecture is a medium of cultural expression only to the extent that we are able to absorb its messages.
In the beginning I proposed to develop the site and building in such a manner that their meanings were effectively communicated. In my process of inquiry I have surveyed many topics and issues pertinent to the design process and an understanding of what constitutes 'good design.' I have set for myself a precedent for learning that will follow me into my profession. Although I could continue to develop the project further, I am pleased with the results I have attained. The knowledge and insight I have gained for myself will continue to develop as I pursue the truth of "Visual Communication of Meaning Through Forms in Architecture."
The former Greyhound Bus Terminal is located at the corner of Webster Street and West Jefferson Boulevard just south of the Central Business District of Fort Wayne, Indiana. It was designed for Greyhound Bus Lines in 1938 by W. S. Arrasmith and was a major influence on the downtown district during the forties and fifties. Today, The building is surrounded by the Embassy Theatre, Botanical Gardens, Hilton Hotel, Grand Wayne Center, and the Public Library; all of which are within an easy one to two block walk from the site. The Historic Landing, Performing arts center, Art Museum, and City-County Building are within four to six blocks and are connected by a partial north-south bus/pedestrian mall on Calhoun Street.

The following is a summary of the size and character of some of the major spaces located within the building.
Entry Corridor

The entry corridor serves the same function as it did once before, only it becomes a much more important spine as it now serves the many different spaces on both floors. It is primarily dark, with light filtering in from the adjacent spaces providing the ambient light and marking the important transitional areas.

Dance Floor

Formerly the waiting lobby, this space now acts as the central activity space for dancing and live entertainment. The environment is trendy in its use of neon and chrome detailing. The main attraction is the mural running along the walls. It is an abstraction in the cubist style that is to depict the history of the busline; as transportation and i Fort Wayne. The colors are transparent in tone, the kind popular to the era.

Bar

Formerly the diner, this space now serves two functions; a lunch counter during the day and the main bar for the club at night. It is open to the dance floor, so the detailing and finishes are the same. Ambient lighting is provided by the neon and a wash on the ceiling. The space provides the least amount of privacy, but is the most active.
Formerly the outside boarding area for the buses, the space beneath the large overhang was captured for use on the interior. The space is more private than the bar, but remains open to the activity of the dance floor. The decor is similar to that of the dance floor and bar. Enough difference exists, however, in its details and finishes to set it apart as its own environment.

Formerly the men's and women's lounges on the second floor, this space now becomes a drinking lounge overlooking the dance floor from a glass enclosed balcony. The glass isolates the space acoustically, but retains the visual interaction. It offers more relaxed seating than any other space and it has its own bar service. It also can be used as a sort of antechamber for the Chicago Room. Neon and chrome are used here again in the same manner as the bar.

Formerly the waiting room on the second floor, this space is now known as the Chicago Room, an elite and sophisticated dining hall specializing in fine dining. The decor leans more heavily towards Art Deco than any other space. It contains the most private, intimate spaces of the entire building. Aside from the normal dining, a small banquet facility is provided. Ambient lighting is provided by washes on the wall and task lighting is provided by table lamps.
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*quotes not found in bibliography may be found in archaebet by balthazar korab.


